THE WARS OF JUSTINIAN



PROKOPIOS

Translated by
H. B. Dewing

Revised and Modernized, with an Introduction and Notes, by
Anthony Kaldellis

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Introduction

Prokopios' *History of the Wars of Justinian* (or simply the *Wars*) is one of the greatest works of history written in antiquity or Byzantium. That is not primarily a statement about its length, though it is lengthy. At 1,200 pages of printed Greek, it is longer than almost every other contemporary history that has come down to us from antiquity but it also covers a shorter time frame than most, about twenty-five years, making it the densest account of contemporary warfare. Because of this there are few periods of ancient history that we know as well in terms of their events and personalities. The *Wars* is written in clear, fluid classical Greek, and rarely bores or confuses the reader. It is an engaging narrative of a fascinating period of history that would otherwise have been much more obscure to us. It draws on classical literature to offer moments of Homeric heroism, Herodotean inquiry, and Thucydidean level-headedness and rhetoric. Prokopios is always in control.

The *Wars* is also an innovative and courageous work, two aspects that go together. The "safe" practice among historians of imperial Rome was to conclude their narration at the end of the *previous* reign, thus avoiding the choice between panegyric (flattery of the current emperor) and personal risk (telling the awful truth). Prokopios was the only one who dared to write and publish a work that covered *mostly* the current reign and that was generally neutral and sometimes critical of the emperor, Justinian, a ruler not known to tolerate disagreement. Prokopios reserved his most biting criticisms for a separate work, which we call the *Secret History*.[1] He also experimented with structure. Justinian's armies were, at times, simultaneously active in five theaters of war: northern Mesopotamia, Lazike (ancient Kolchis, modern Georgia), the Danube frontier, Italy, and North Africa. There was no precedent for writing a military history about so much going on at the same time. Prokopios' tripartite solution has served historians well, though it poses difficulties too.

The events of the sixth century were momentous enough, but there is also a sense in which it was an "unexpected" century. It defies the logical progression from the world of the Roman empire to that of the Middle Ages and Islam. If we knew only the major changes of the fifth and seventh centuries, namely the fall of the western Roman empire and the Arab conquests, we would never postulate the resurgence of Roman power and culture in the sixth century. The fifth-century East was prosperous and relatively quiet, excepting the usual interminable theological controversies. In the sixth century it not only mobilized the resources to reconquer a large part of the West from the barbarians, once and for all codify Roman law, and build Hagia Sophia (projects attributable

1. A. Kaldellis, *Prokopios: The Secret History, with Related Texts* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010).

to Justinian's initiative), it was also (no thanks to Justinian though) dynamic and innovative in its literary production, including historiography, philosophy and political thought, science, poetry (in both Greek and Latin), geography, antiquarian scholarship, theology, and hagiography. Justinian looms over this period as its main doer, Prokopios as its chief reporter.

The *Wars* is long enough and does not need an extensive introduction to further lengthen this volume. There is no point in giving an overview of the reign, as there are plenty of books that do that and they rely largely on the *Wars* anyway. The topics the work does not cover, especially Church history, are largely irrelevant to its own subject matter, which is war. This introduction, then, presents what we know about the author and a likely theory about the construction and composition of this work and its esoteric supplement, the *Secret History*. While Prokopios' military narrative is clear enough, he does not divulge basic information about the organization of the Roman army in the sixth century, which he took for granted. This will therefore be laid out in the second section. For other topics of possible interest, such as the enemies with whom the empire was at war, the reader is referred to the guide to scholarship below.

The Composition of Prokopios' Works

All the facts that we know about Prokopios' life come from his own writings. He was born ca. 500 in the major coastal city of Kaisareia (*Caesarea Maritima*), the seat of the governor of the province of Palaestina Prima. The city was a center of learning since the third century (Eusebios was its bishop in the early fourth century) and it boasted many amenities and monuments. The population of its territory was religiously mixed, including Christians of many varieties, pagans, Jews, and Samaritans. We estimate the date of Prokopios' birth from his appearance in 527 as the legal advisor/secretary of the rising military officer Belisarios (soon promoted to general in 529) and the fact that he was still writing in the 550s. His movements for the period 527–540 were determined by his service to Belisarios, as revealed by seemingly random glimpses in the narrative of the *Wars*. Before being posted to the east, Belisarios belonged to the retinue of Justinian, who was a general but resident in Constantinople. It is likely, then, that Prokopios and Belisarios met in the capital during the 520s.

Prokopios served on the eastern front in 527–531. In 533 he sailed from Constantinople with the expedition to North Africa and probably returned with Belisarios for the triumph in Constantinople in 534 (though that is not certain). It is likely that he accompanied Belisarios to Sicily in 535; at any rate, we know that in Easter 536 he was in Carthage with Solomon. He then served Belisarios in Italy during the first phase of the Gothic War (536–540), experiencing the siege of Rome, being sent on various missions, and witnessing the fall of Ravenna in 540. Presumably he returned to Constantinople with Belisarios in 540 and was there when the plague broke out in 542. There is no evidence that he served under the general again after that point, especially

when Belisarios was disgraced and lost many of his retainers and staff. We cannot account for Prokopios' whereabouts for the next decade.

In 550–551, Prokopios finished the first seven books of the *Wars* and the *Secret History*, presumably in Constantinople (though we cannot be certain of that). He had, however, been working on the *Wars* for some time, possibly since the 530s. Earlier stages of composition are visible in passages where Prokopios dates the time of writing to the mid-540s (1.25.43, 6.5.26–27). The original end of the *Vandal War* was clearly 546: Prokopios subsequently added a summary page to bring the story down to 550. We can conjecture, therefore, that a prior version (never released) ended with the events of 545–546, which also coincides with a break in the continuity of his reporting on the eastern front (2.28.11–16). But the war in Italy was ongoing, as it would be still in 551, when he finally released the first installment of the *Wars*.

The protracted delay of publication entailed structural adjustments to the work. Had Prokopios finished his history ten years earlier, in 540, right after the victory over the Goths but before the resumption of war with Persia, he could have written about the three wars in sequence, for the Endless Peace with Persia was signed in 532, the Vandal War in North Africa took up the next two years (533–534, though the new province remained unstable), and the Gothic War in Italy, which began in 535, seemed to be over by 540. Prokopios had personally witnessed almost all major operations. One scholar has proposed a seam in the work where the account of the Persian War originally led, in 532, to the Vandal War.[2] After 540, however, the three main theaters of war flared up again, and the Balkans became increasingly unstable as Huns, Slavs, and others raided across the Danube. Prokopios probably already had long blocks of text, each dealing with a separate war. Rather than break them up and distribute them among the different theaters by year, as Thucydides had done, Prokopios split his narrative into three Wars, posing instead problems of coordination and relegating the Balkan events to digressions in the Gothic War. This also left domestic matters without a home. Some important events, such as the Nika Riots and plague, were placed in the Persian War, while others, such as an alleged conspiracy against Justinian, in the Gothic War. Eventually most internal coverage found its way into the *Secret History*, a supplementary book necessary for understanding the *Wars* in many places.

What was the relationship between the *Secret History* and the *Wars*? In the preface to the *Secret History*, Prokopios states that he included in it all the events that took place within the Roman empire that he could not tell in the *Wars* out of fear of the regime and its spies. When he later refers to that fear and those spies, it is with reference to Theodora (*Secret History* 16.3, 16.13–14), who died in 548. It has therefore been proposed that the passages dealing with the fall of the hated prefect Ioannes the Kappadokian in the *Wars*, which read as if they came from the "dossier" that formed the *Secret History* and do not fit naturally into the narrative of the *Wars*, were in fact

2. G. Greatrex, "The Composition of Procopius' *Persian Wars* and John the Cappadocian," *Prudentia* 27 (1995): 1–13.

transferred to the *Wars* from there after the death of Theodora.[3] This creates the possibility that Prokopios was planning to write only one work that would have contained the material from both the *Wars* and *Secret History*, and that the delay in its publication was caused not only by the ongoing conflicts in the east and Italy but perhaps also by the author's expectation that the emperor would die and that an integrated polemical history would be safer to publish. Justinian was, after all, about sixty in 542. Prokopios seems to have wanted the overthrow of his regime already in 544 (*Secret History* 4.40) and was supporting the emperor's cousin Germanos by the late 540s, a man who had suffered at the hands of Theodora and who might, as a likely successor to the throne, introduce different policies (but he died in 550).[4] When Justinian was eventually replaced, in 565, with a nephew, his policies were repudiated by the new regime.[5]

By 550 at the latest, Prokopios was also planning to write an *Ecclesiastical History*, which he promises in a number of places, but this work seems never to have been written. Judging from his references to its intended contents, it would have been a scandalous work, closer to the *Secret History* in spirit.[6]

The most recent events included in the first seven books of the *Wars* date to early 551 at the latest. While scholars have proposed that various individual passages may refer to later events, in no case has this actually been proven.[7] It would require that Prokopios in, say, 554, went back and added only one trivial piece of information to an otherwise finished narrative without modifying any other passages of the many that would have been obviously out of date by then. It would also mean that no trace of these variant editions of *Wars* 1–7 survives in the manuscript tradition, despite the fact that the work was widely disseminated already in 551 (cf. 8.1.1) and copied often in Byzantium. Besides, he was working on the supplementary book 8 of the *Wars*, which carried the narrative down to the autumn of 552, including the decisive defeat of the Goths in Italy. That book refers to no event after late 552, and was probably finished in 553.[8]

The third work that Prokopios wrote was a long panegyric of Justinian, *On the Buildings*, focusing on the emperor's constructions. The date of this work cannot be securely fixed, though it now appears that Prokopios produced two versions, an early one and an expanded one that postdates the *Wars*.[9] We do not know whether it was ever finished, delivered to Justinian, or what circumstances prompted its composition. At

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3. G. Greatrex, "Procopius the Outsider?" in D. C. Smythe, ed., *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 215–28.

4. See esp. *Wars* 7.37.24–25. J. Signes Codoñer, "Prokops *Anecdota* und Justinians Nachfolge," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 53 (2003): 47–82.

5. As shown in Corippus, *In Praise of Justin II*.

6. A. Kaldellis, "The Date and Structure of Prokopios' *Secret History* and His Projected Work on Church History," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 49 (2009): 585–616.

7. E.g., 1.17.40, 1.20.13, 2.28.12–14.

8. The assumption is that 8.15.17 projects the calculation out to 556 (when the treaty would end).

9. F. Montinaro, "Byzantium and the Slavs in the Reign of Justinian: Comparing the Two Recensions of Procopius's *Buildings*," in V. Ivanišević and M. Kazanski, eds., *The Pontic-Danubian*

any rate, the dynamics of imperial patronage in the empire were such that a request for a panegyrical work could not be turned down, nor should an attempt by Prokopios to secure the favor of an emperor qualify the hostility to the regime that he displays in the *Secret History* and *Wars*. Authors under Justinian did not enjoy freedom of speech. For all that, the *Buildings* is a major source for understanding the church architecture, art history, archaeology, and topography of the sixth-century empire.

Little that is definite can be said about Prokopios' sources for the majority of the *Wars*. For his brief coverage of the fifth century, we know or suspect that he consulted historians whose works are now mostly lost (Priskos of Panion and Eustathios of Epiphaneia), but for most of the *Wars* there would not have been useful written accounts. For what he did not witness himself, Prokopios would have relied on an extensive network of military, diplomatic, court, and personal contacts, in addition to the official documents that passed through his hands as the advisor of the empire's top general. It is fruitless to speculate beyond that. He certainly knew (some) Latin; as for Gothic, Syriac, or Persian, we cannot say.

We can say much more, by contrast, about the literary traditions on which Prokopios modeled his narrative, which count as "sources" too, for they shaped much of the information he conveys. In ways large and small, he advertised his imitation of the classical historians, especially Thucydides but also Herodotos, Xenophon, and others. The footnotes to the translation identify a number of these intertextual moments. Prokopios not only borrowed from those authors a range of expressions for referring to places, people, times, and events, he also modeled whole episodes on corresponding versions in them, most famously the plague of 542 but also sieges, speeches, debates, and battles. Past fears that this practice undermined the factual, contemporary reliability of his narrative have largely been refuted: even if the template is borrowed, the details are different and authentic (to the degree that they can be independently verified). Besides, this practice was hardly unique to Prokopios. In late antiquity, being trained to write in classical Greek primarily entailed training in rhetoric, which referred both to formal speeches and to the art of prose composition more generally. Students learned to compose both descriptive and persuasive set pieces, and the former could include descriptions of events too. So the models and textbooks used in the schools of rhetoric were the classical orators *and* the historians. Before he saw a single battle, Prokopios was probably capable of writing a clear and gripping generic account of one. His experiences and sources later gave him the material to pour into these templates.[10]

Moreover, Prokopios is often clever in the comparisons that he chooses to establish between his subjects and their classical counterparts, adding layers of meaning to his text. His quotations and allusions sometimes point to subversive or at any rate interesting parallels: these could be recognized only by those who shared his classical education. For all others the text would inevitably be flatter, even if still more than adequate as a historical narrative.

Realm in the Period of the Great Migration (Paris and Belgrade: Arheološki Institute, 2011), 89–114.

10. A. Kaldellis, "The Classicism of Prokopios," in M. Meier, ed., *The Brill Companion to Procopius* (Leiden) forthcoming.

The Armies of Justinian

The Roman armed forces of the age of Justinian were the direct institutional descendants of the armies of the Republic and early empire, modified by the reforms of Diocletian (r. 284–305) and Constantine (r. 306–337), and changed by gradual adjustments over the next two centuries. This section lays out the organizational structure of Justinian's armies. For their modes of fighting, weapons, strategy, tactics, and the function of forts and walled cities in the defense of territories, readers have no better guide than the narrative of the *Wars* itself.[11] Strategies for responding to specific foreign threats are outlined in the next section.

The majority of Roman soldiers were divided between two categories. The first were the *limitanei* ("border soldiers"), who served in a particular location by the frontier and usually did not move from it. They were maintained in part by lands designated for that purpose and commanded by *duces* (singular, *dux*), who were in charge of specific territories (there were about fifteen *duces*). These units performed routine border patrol and policing and were the first responders in case of foreign invasion. Prokopios says that Justinian stopped paying *limitanei* and then decommissioned them entirely (*Secret History* 24.12–14), a polemical and distorted claim. Justinian degraded these soldiers in some way, probably by not paying them when they were not on active duty, but he also instituted them in North Africa after its conquest, sending an eastern unit and instructing Belisarios to recruit more locally (in *Codex Justinianus* 1.27, hereafter cited as *CJ*, under five additional *duces*). The backbone of the *limitanei* system was the series of fortifications that the late Roman state built extensively around forts, depots, and cities along almost all of its frontiers. These enabled local troops to muster safely, to control and defend the surrounding territory, to protect the population from raiders, and either waste the enemy's time and supplies by sieges or expose their rear to attack should they just bypass the fortified center and head deeper into Roman territory.

The second category were the mobile field armies, called *comitatenses* in fourth-century Latin. Before Justinian, the eastern empire had four field armies: two were "praesental" (i.e., in the imperial presence), stationed in lands around Constantinople, and three were regional, for Illyria, Thrace, and the East. These armies were under the command of a general, called *magister militum* in Latin and *strategos* in Greek. These were the more full-time, expeditionary armies of the later empire and they enjoyed higher status and better pay than the *limitanei*. Justinian eventually added three more field armies, for Armenia, North Africa, and Italy, and a command for Spain, when he became involved there in the 550s (not in Prokopios); these all had more frontier *duces* under their authority. The majority of soldiers that we encounter in the *Wars* come from the mobile field armies. For example, the expeditionary force that Belisarios took

11. For a survey, see H. Elton, "Army and Battle in the Age of Justinian (527–65)," in P. Erdcamp, ed., *A Companion to the Roman Army* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 532–50.

to North Africa in 533 contained many men from the field army of the East, the command that he held at the time. These ad hoc forces were cobbled together from various detachments, but mostly from the field armies, and ranged in total size between 5,000 and 20,000 men.

Numbers are a notoriously difficult problem, both the paper strength of the units and their strength in fact at any time. Prokopios says that the field army of the east in 531 had 20,000 men (*Wars* 1.18.5) and the army of Illyria 15,000 men in 548 (7.29.3), and these figures are supported by evidence for the fifth century.[12] Prokopios' continuer Agathias says that all the armies together had 150,000 men (*Histories* 5.13.7–8), presumably meaning only the field armies after Justinian's creation of four more (including Spain). This means that each army was between 15,000 and 20,000 strong. As the *limitanei* seem to have amounted to two-thirds of the total army, they would have been 300,000 additional men posted in frontier provinces. Adding the fleets and a number of other types of units (see below), we come to a total of about half a million fighting men—on paper, of course. This was about the population of the capital, Constantinople. If the population of the empire (including the conquered provinces) was around 30 million, this means that one out of every thirty males served in the army, and the ratio is lower if we consider only fit men between eighteen and forty. The army was therefore a sizable demographic presence in Roman life, even beyond its huge institutional presence.

There was a marked increase in the proportion of cavalry to infantry in this period, especially in the field armies, but many modern historians have been misled by the preface of *Wars*, which makes a facetious argument, into thinking that war was now all about cavalry. Most Romans continued to fight on foot. Cavalry amounted to maybe 20 percent of the field armies, and that in turn included a tiny number of mounted archers who could do the things that Prokopios says in the preface. However, the *Wars* makes clear that cavalry was overrepresented in expeditionary forces. Belisarios preferred to fight with cavalry, though Prokopios repeatedly reminds his readers of the virtues of the old-style, disciplined infantry formations, which no cavalry charge could break.[13]

In addition to the *limitanei*, *comitatenses*, and *foederati* (see below), there were also the *bucellarii*, the "private" elite armies that prominent generals and high-ranking magistrates in this period could recruit and support, if they had the means. At his peak, Belisarios maintained 7,000 *bucellarii*, mostly cavalry (*Wars* 7.1.20). They are called his "bodyguard" but were in fact an elite corps that functioned as the general's command staff and carried out special assignments. They were not "private" in a legal sense; like

12. W. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army, 284–1081* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 47.

13. A. Kaldellis, "Classicism, Barbarism, and Warfare: Prokopios and the Conservative Reaction to Later Roman Military Policy," *American Journal of Ancient History* n.s. 3–4 (2004–2005 [2007]): 189–218. More discussion of the preface is warranted; it is wrongly taken at face value. Though I am not certain of the reading I offer here, the facts about the cavalry ratios stand.

any other unit, they were absolutely at the emperor's disposal. Belisarios himself was stripped of most of them in 542 and later in the century all such units were folded into the regular army. More prestigious generals could poach each other's *bucellarii* (*Wars* 7.39.17). Emperors had their own guard in Constantinople (we must not forget that the palace was a military-administrative installation with walls, gates, and a garrison). There were the *scholae*, seven units of 500 men, but by the time of Justinian they had lost their military value: their rank had become a commodity bought from the court (*Secret History* 24.15–23). The real guard at this time were the *excubitores*, 300 strong and under the command of the *comes excubitorum*, a high rank that produced many emperors (including Justin I).

Soldiers were recruited through conscription, hereditary obligations (to serve after one's father, especially in the *limitanei*), and volunteers. Sometimes before expeditions, generals would go around the usual provinces and use cash to entice men to sign up (*Wars* 7.10.1–3, 8.26.5–17). Justinian enrolled increasingly more foreign soldiers, especially when the plague (starting in 541) decimated the empire's population. Foreigners volunteered in small or large groups, defected to the emperor, were defeated in war and absorbed into the Roman army (e.g., the Vandals after 534), or served as allies, often in discrete units and under their own leaders, following treaties made between their kings and the emperor. Justinian made many such deals with peoples along the Danube, including Huns, Bulgars, and Lombards. It was also a long-standing policy of the emperors to settle large groups of barbarians in empty or deserted lands, especially along the Danube, which they would bring into cultivation (eventually paying taxes) and provide recruits. Along the southeastern frontier, the Romans made deals with local Arab chiefs, conventionally called Ghassanids by scholars but now Jafnids (led by al-Harith), to provide armies if necessary but mostly to patrol the zone between Rome and Persia and serve as a counterweight to Persia's own Arab allies, conventionally known as Lakhmids and now Nasrids (led by al-Mundhir). (The difference in nomenclature is that between these rulers' respective "peoples," which are hard to identify in the sources, and their dynasties.) Allied foreign units were called *foederati* (*foedus* was a treaty), but soon Romans could join these units (*Wars* 3.11.3–4). The presence of these foreigners made the army a more multi-ethnic institution than any other part of late Roman society, increasingly so in the 540s and 550s.

The military was the single largest expense of the imperial treasury, claiming about half the budget, perhaps more. It was the chief means by which money would enter the Roman economy (and often travel beyond it): the state paid its soldiers and thus coins would enter the cycle, being eventually collected back by the state in taxes, restamped, and reissued. Soldiers were supported by a mixture of cash payments and supplies in kind, the balance between the two varying by time and place, ability and need; by the sixth century the balance tipped toward cash. The state could provide soldiers' equipment, including clothes (from state factories), horses, and weapons (whose manufacture was an imperial monopoly), or these could be commuted to cash. A crippling problem

faced by the army in the mid-sixth century, especially after 540, was Justinian's inability to pay so many soldiers who were active simultaneously. Their pay would fall into arrears and they would either resort to extortion from the local population (especially in Italy), rebel, desert to the enemy, or just go home (e.g., *Wars* 7.11.13–16). There were also special cash donatives paid upon an imperial accession and every five years thereafter. Prokopios says (apparently truthfully) that Justinian abolished the quinquennial donatives (*Secret History* 24.27–29). Campaigns and expeditions always cost extra, and sometimes required massive outlays upfront. There were no banks to lend money to the state. The emperors had to save up for this and, if the expedition failed (such as the disastrous effort to retake North Africa in 468, for which we have figures; *Wars* 3.6.1–2), the empire would be unable to act until it raised the money again. Conversely, conquest could bring riches (such as the Vandal treasury) that offset the initial expense and could pay for the next round of war. Regular revenue in the empire was raised by the office of the praetorian prefect, which was in charge of most taxation. That is why the prefect Ioannes the Kappadokian objected most to the proposed Vandal expedition in 533 (*Wars* 3.10.7): he would have to find the money for it, just when he was building Hagia Sophia.

We know little about the imperial navy beyond what Prokopios tells us. Its appears prominently in the North African campaign, ferrying the army across the Mediterranean and shadowing its march on Carthage. It was used to supply the coastal Roman forts in Italy during the Gothic War, especially when Totila had gained control of most of the peninsula in the 540s. The navy also routinely patrolled the Danube. In 536, Justinian organized the fleets under the command of the *quaestor exercitus* (*Novel* 51).

The Present Translation and Notes

This translation of the *Wars* is a thoroughly revised version of the translation made by Henry Bronson Dewing and published in the Loeb Classical Library series in five volumes between 1914 and 1928.[14] Dewing's translation, which was very good for its time, is now out of copyright, but this is not a reprint of it. I have corrected Dewing's occasional errors, eliminated his archaism, modernized the language throughout, and in many places brought out contemporary nuances that Dewing missed. Aiming for an international audience, I have tried to avoid American and

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14. The standard edition of the Greek text of the *Wars* is (and will likely long remain) that by J. Haury, revised by G. Wirth, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia*, vols. 1–2 (Leipzig, 1962–1963). I was surprised to discover while working on this project that H. B. Dewing, an American classicist, served as the President of Athens College in 1927–1930. This is the Hellenic-American school from which I graduated in 1990 (specializing in physics and biology). Dewing was President when the landmark building of the campus, Benaki Hall, opened. He took up the position as soon as he finished the *Wars* and stepped down before turning to the *Secret History* (published in 1935).

British idioms, but hopefully not at the cost of making the prose flavorless. In all, there is hardly a sentence that is left unchanged, and often the revisions are extensive. I have added dates to the margins, almost a thousand footnotes (see below), maps, and a wealth of other auxiliary material. My goal has been to produce an accessible, reliable, and affordable translation of the *Wars* in a single volume. There is no such version of the text currently available in any language. Prokopios is a major historian on a par with any of his ancient or medieval counterparts, and he deserves to be more widely available.

The revised translation has also been equipped with hundreds of notes. They (1) provide cross-references within the text when Prokopios alludes to previous or future discussions (but not cross-references to the appearances of every item in the *Wars*; for that there is an index); (2) cite classical sources, especially Thucydides, where Prokopios seems to be imitating their narrative or using their expressions (not for common expressions of two or three words, but usually for extended textual resonance); (3) provide information from other contemporary sources that supplement, explain, or challenge the testimony of Prokopios (see the guide to the main sources below); and (4) explain passages or references that are obscure at first sight or allude to individuals or events that modern readers may not know. Obviously, they are not comprehensive, nor do they form a full commentary on the *Wars*. Modern bibliography is excluded from the notes, or else they would have swollen to an unmanageable length, nor is the appearance of individuals across the *Wars* cross-referenced in them (again, that is what the index is for). For the careers and offices of Prokopios' protagonists, the interested reader should consult the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (see the guide to scholarship). In the notes I have generally avoided offering or citing interpretations of what Prokopios is saying.

As always, I cannot thank Ian Mladjov enough for providing the excellent maps, barbarian genealogies, templates for the ruler lists, and his general (and constructive) scrutiny of all my decisions in preparing this volume. Ian has made available online a set of invaluable resources for scholars and teachers of history (named "Ian Mladjov's Resources"). A note on the maps: regional names are used by Prokopios in a general sense and do not often correspond to specific Roman provinces, though they were used for that purpose too. We have therefore decided not to define them with borders. Nor did we deem it useful to include all the Roman mini-provinces that would just clutter up the maps.

The Spelling of Names

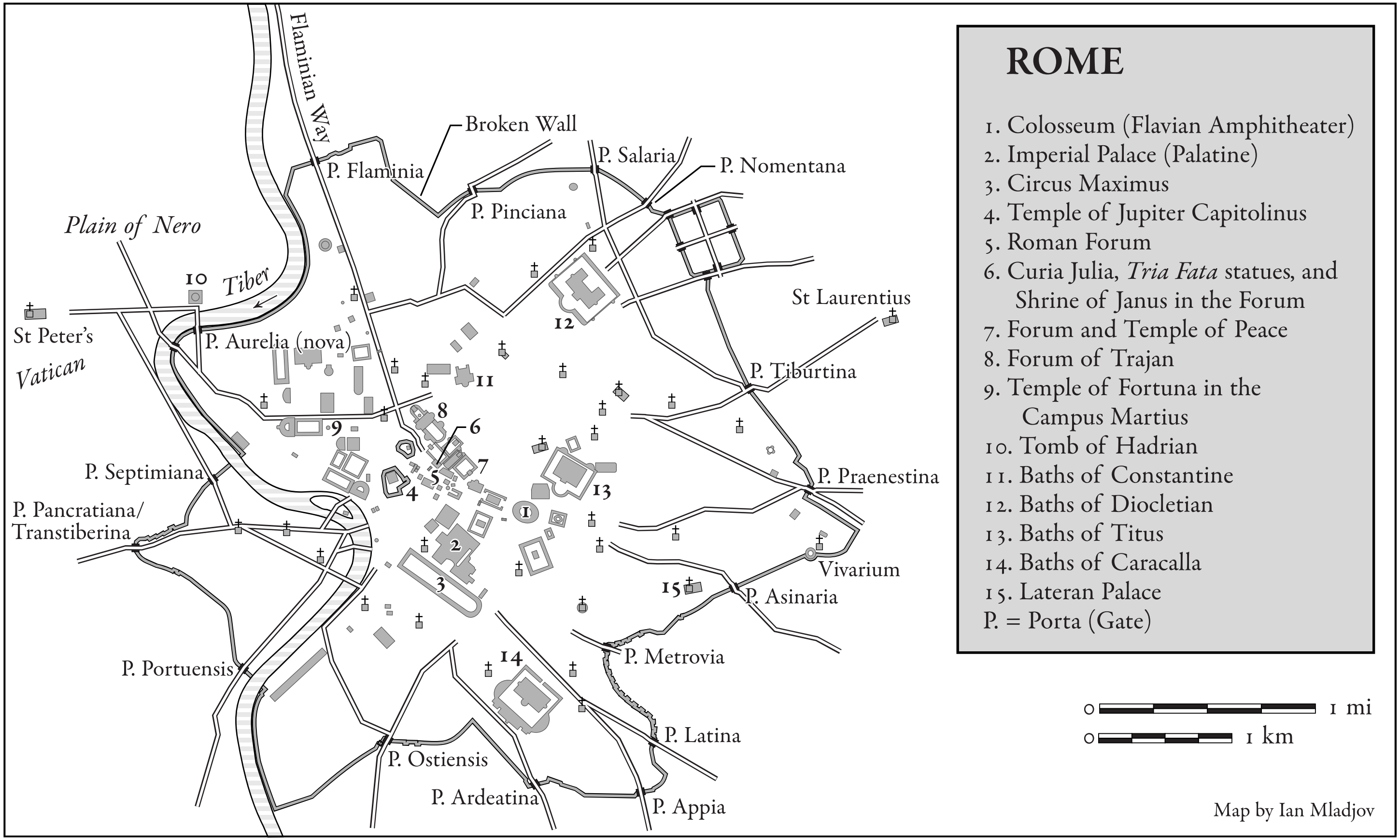
Most personal names in Prokopios come from four linguistic traditions (Greek, Latin, Gothic, and Iranian), though he spells all according to Greek conventions. In general—and there are exceptions to the following "rules"—I have used the familiar "English" forms for well-known personages (e.g., Justinian, Theoderic); Latin

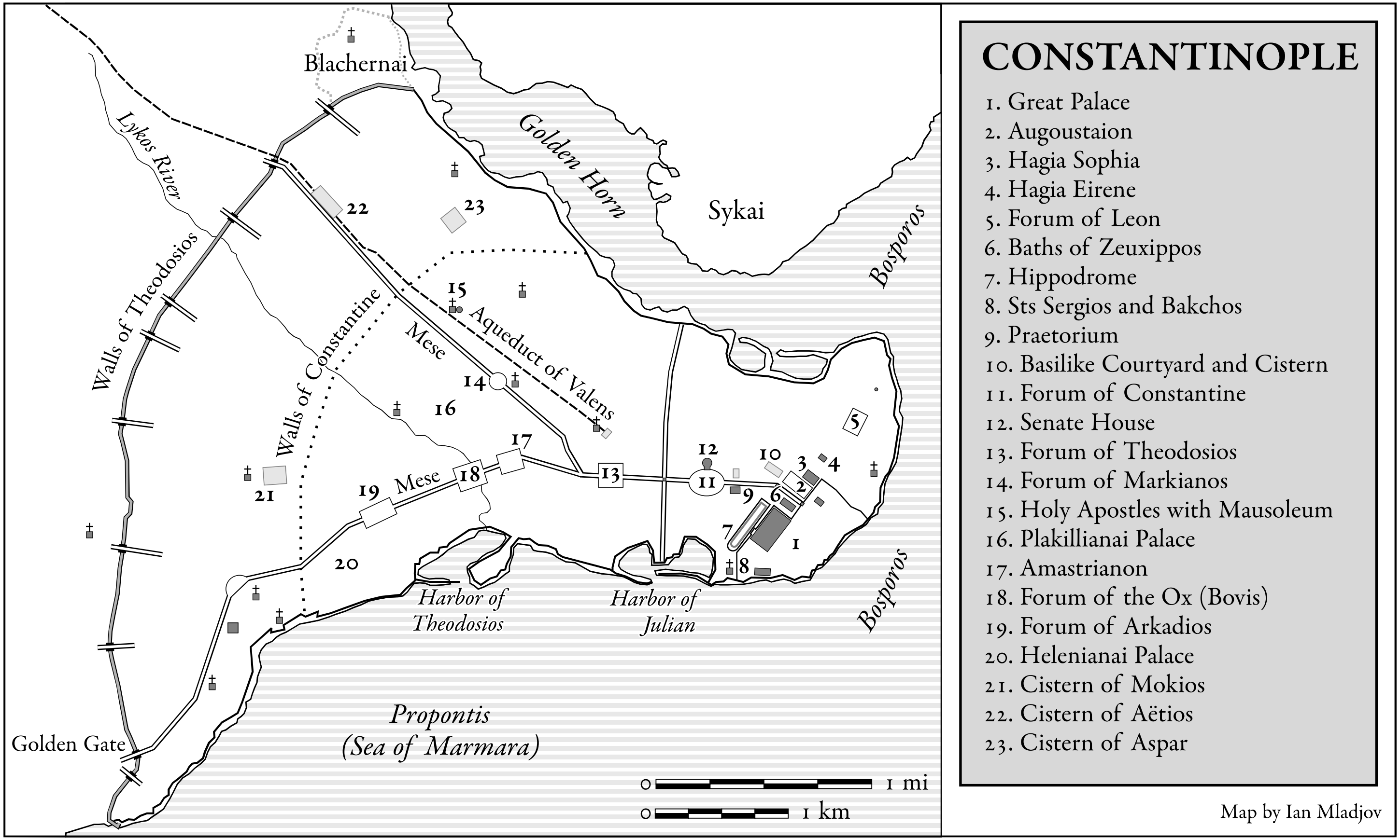
spelling for the names of Romans from the western half of the empire (e.g., Paulus); and Greek spelling for Romans from the eastern empire (e.g., Paulos). There is no justification left for Anglicizing or Latinizing Byzantine names. As for Gothic names, I have tried to spell them as "authentically" as possible, keeping in mind that there was no standardized way of spelling anything in the early Germanic languages and that in most cases we have only a Latin or a Greek version. I have followed M. Schönfeld's *Wörterbuch der altgermanischen personen- und Völkernamen* (Heidelberg, 1911). Iranian names are a problem. Even more than the Germanic ones, they are spelled in a wide variety of ways in the sources, which were written in different languages and in widely separated periods. F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Marburg, 1895), does not aim to provide usable modern forms. In the translation I have tried to give the modern Persian renditions of the middle Persian forms, which are the forms most used in modern scholarship, for example, in N. Frye's *Heritage of Persia* and the *Cambridge History of Iran* (vol. 3); I thank Ian Mladjov for his help with this. When I have been unable to reconstruct that form, which is often, I have simply transliterated the Greek form used by Prokopios. I have also left the name Chosroes in its Greek form. As for Arabic names, after flirting with the full system of diacritics used in proper transliteration, I reverted to more simple forms. Granted, the diacritics aspire to a higher standard of philological exactness, and perhaps even cultural sensitivity, but the need to use special keyboards and fonts and to know which vowels of an unknown language are long before you can write a name erects barriers between fields and prevents their communication.

For place-names, I have used Greek forms for those in the eastern empire (excluding well-known places such as Athens), Latin forms for North Africa, and modern names for places in Italy, France, and Spain, which usually derive from the ancient Latin ones (whose Greek versions are used by Prokopios). But I make exception for places whose modern name does not derive from the ancient (e.g., I keep Centumcellae, not Civitavecchia); in these cases, the modern name is given in the notes. "Byzantion" is how Prokopios refers to the city of Constantinople; "Byzantium," by contrast, is a modern invention that refers to the empire as a whole.

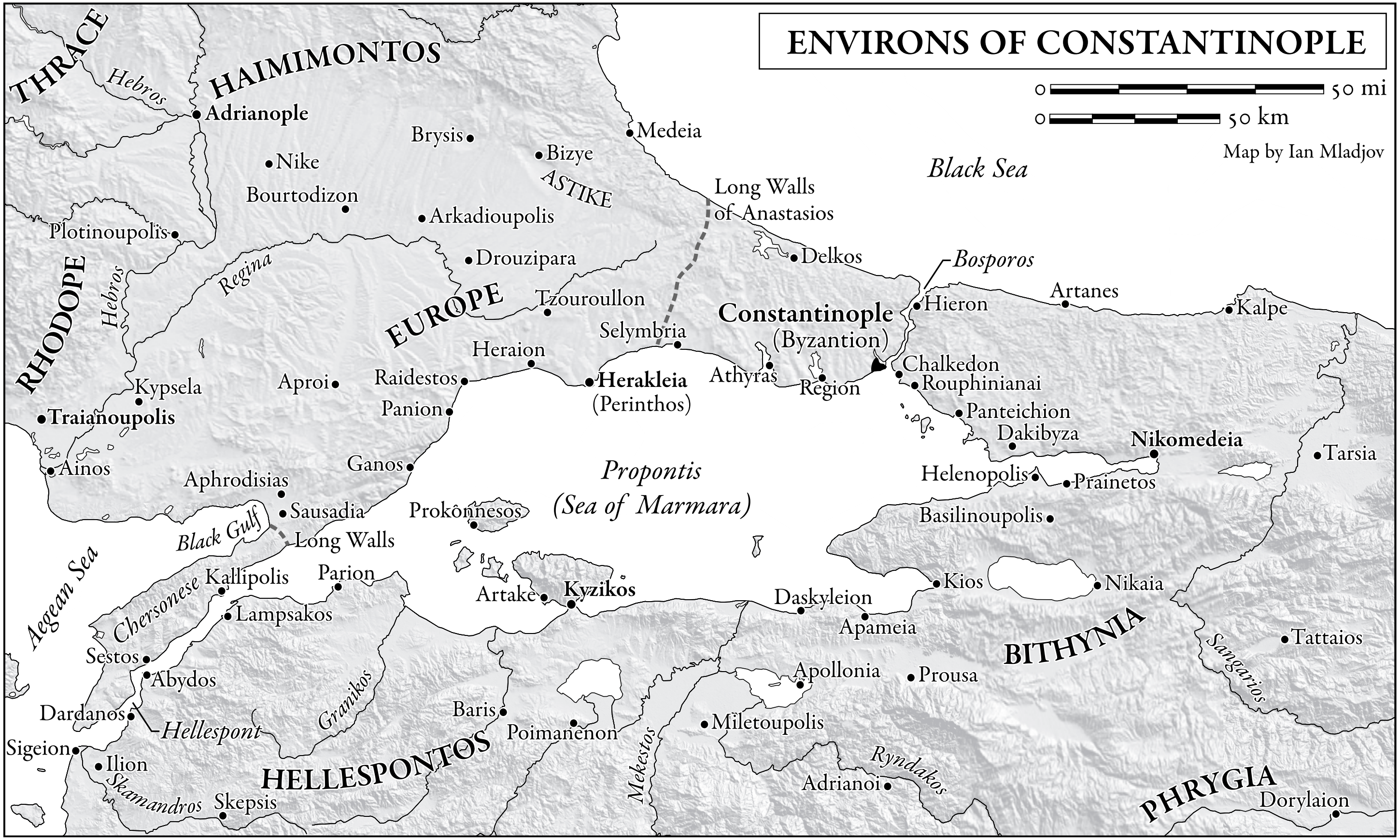
Note on the Formatting of the Translation

As published by Prokopios, the *Wars* consists of eight books: the book number is here given at the top of each page of the translation. The books have, moreover, been divided by modern editors into chapters, between twenty-five and forty in number: the chapters are here separated by an empty line and their number given in bold print. Furthermore, for precision in citing the text each chapter has been divided into sections, some of which are only a sentence long: the section numbers are embedded in the main body of the text in square brackets. The italicized numbers in the margins are dates, exact or approximate. The footnotes are by Kaldellis.


ROME
1. Colosseum (Flavian Amphitheater)
2. Imperial Palace (Palatine)
3. Circus Maximus
4. Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus
5. Roman Forum
6. Curia Julia, *Tria Fata* statues, and Shrine of Janus in the Forum
7. Forum and Temple of Peace
8. Forum of Trajan
9. Temple of Fortuna in the Campus Martius
10. Tomb of Hadrian
11. Baths of Constantine
12. Baths of Diocletian
13. Baths of Titus
14. Baths of Caracalla
15. Lateran Palace
P. = Porta (Gate)
Flaminian Way
Broken Wall
P. Salaria
P. Nomentana
P. Flaminia
P. Pinciana
Plain of Nero
Tiber
St Peter's
Vatican
P. Aurelia (nova)
St Laurentius
P. Tiburtina
P. Septimiana
P. Praenestina
P. Pancratiana/
Transtiberina
Vivarium
P. Asinaria
P. Metrovia
P. Portuensis
P. Latina
P. Ostiensis
P. Ardeatina
P. Appia
0 1 mi
0 1 km
Map by Ian Mladjov



CONSTANTINOPLE
1. Great Palace
2. Augoustaion
3. Hagia Sophia
4. Hagia Eirene
5. Forum of Leon
6. Baths of Zeuxippos
7. Hippodrome
8. Sts Sergios and Bakchos
9. Praetorium
10. Basilike Courtyard and Cistern
11. Forum of Constantine
12. Senate House
13. Forum of Theodosios
14. Forum of Markianos
15. Holy Apostles with Mausoleum
16. Plakillianai Palace
17. Amastrianon
18. Forum of the Ox (Bovis)
19. Forum of Arkadios
20. Helenianai Palace
21. Cistern of Mokios
22. Cistern of Aëtios
23. Cistern of Aspar
Blachernai
Golden Horn
Sykai
Bosporos
Bosporos
Lykos River
Walls of Theodosios
Walls of Constantine
Mese
Mese
Aqueduct of Valens
Harbor of Theodosios
Harbor of Julian
Propontis (Sea of Marmara)
Golden Gate
0 1 mi
0 1 km
Map by Ian Mladjov

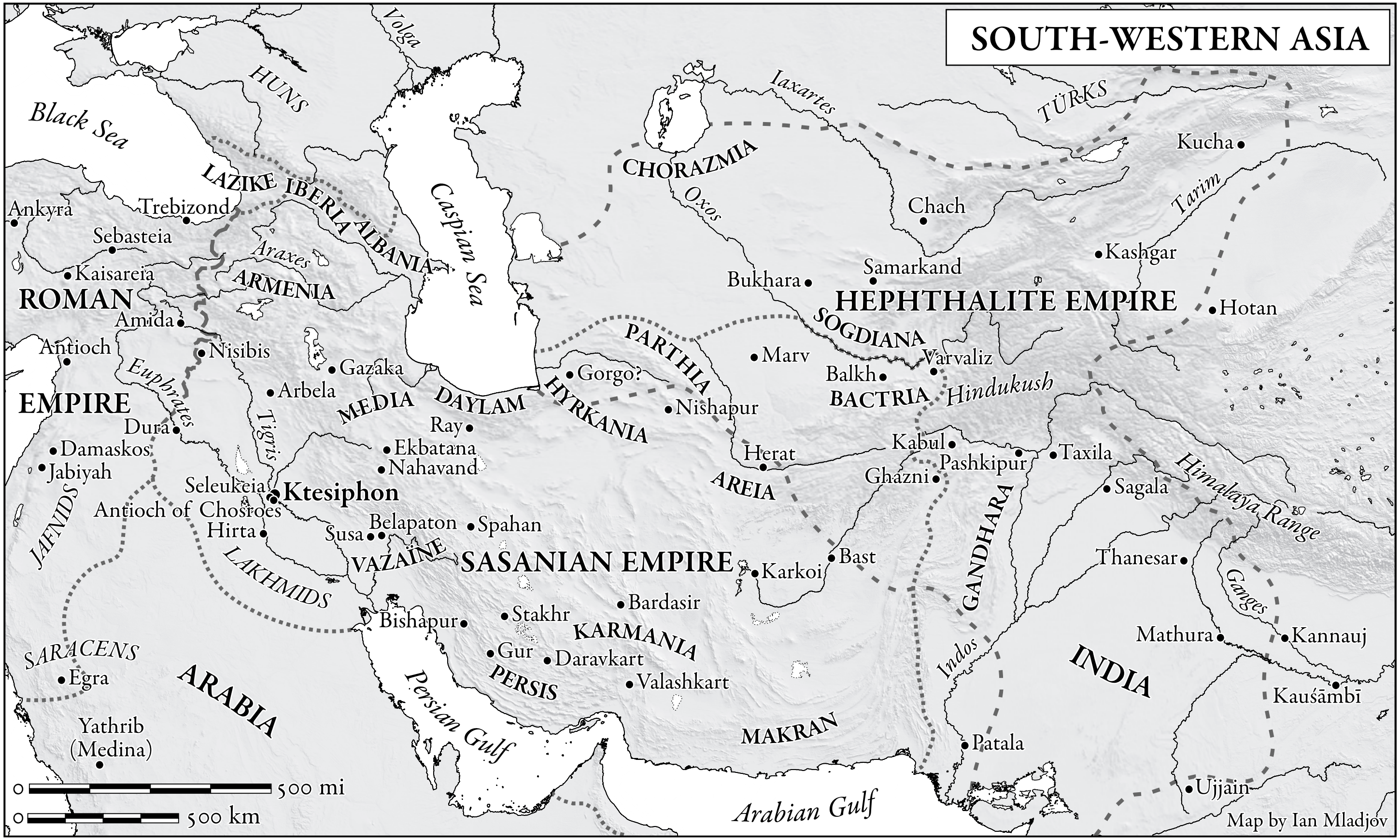

ENVIRONS OF CONSTANTINOPLE
0 50 mi
0 50 km
Map by Ian Mladjov
Black Sea
THRACE
HAIMIMONTOS
Hebros
Adrianople
Brysis
Medeia
Bizye
Nike
ASTIKE
Bourtodizon
Long Walls of Anastasios
Arkadioupolis
Plotinoupolis
Delkos
Drouzipara
Bosporos
RHODOPE
Regina
Hebros
Artanes
Tzouroullon
Hieron
Kalpe
EUROPE
Constantinople (Byzantion)
Selymbria
Heraion
Chalkedon
Athyras
Rouphinianai
Kypsela
Aproi
Raidestos
Herakleia (Perinthos)
Region
Panteichion
Traianoupolis
Panion
Dakibyza
Nikomedeia
Tarsia
Ainos
Ganos
Propontis (Sea of Marmara)
Helenopolis
Prainetos
Aphrodisias
Sausadia
Prokônnesos
Basilinoupolis
Black Gulf
Long Walls
Aegean Sea
Chersonese
Kallipolis
Parion
Kios
Nikaia
Artake
Kyzikos
Daskyleion
Lampsakos
Apameia
BITHYNIA
Tattaios
Sestos
Abydos
Apollonia
Prousa
Sangarios
Granikos
Dardanos
Hellespont
Baris
Poimanenon
Miletoupolis
Sigeion
Ilion
Mekestos
Ryndakos
HELLESPONTOS
Skamandros
Skepsis
Adrianoi
PHRYGIA
Dorylaion


BALKANS
0 50 mi
0 50 km
Map by Ian Mladjov
PANNONIA
GEPIDS
Sava
Sirmium
Singidunum
Viminacium
Gratiana?
MOESIA (I)
ILLYRIA
DALMATIA
Burnum
Salona
Muccurum
Laurento
Stagnum
Epidauros
PRAEVALITANA
Doclea
Scodra
Lissus
Adriatic Sea
Dyrrachion
Apollonia
Aulon
EPEIROS
Bari
APULIA
Brindisi
Taranto
Otranto
Thurii
Rusciane
Crotone
Ionian Sea
Othonoi
Onchesmos
Kasope
Kerkyra
Sybotai
Dodone
Ambrakia
Nikopolis
Lychnidos
Herakleia
Stobi
Tauresium
Bederiana
Scupi
DARDANIA
Ulpiana
Iustiniana Prima
Naïssus
Bononia
Ratiaria
Montana
DACIA
Serdica
Germania
MACEDONIA
Thessalonike
Stageira
Potidaia
Philippoi
Topiros
THESSALY
Larissa
Demetrias
Pharsalos
Aegean Sea
Lesbos
SLAVS
ANTAE
Turris?
Danube
Oescus
Novae
Nicopolis
MOESIA (II)
Abritus
Markianoupolis
Odessos
Dorostolon
SCYTHIA
Histria
Tomis
Callatis
Black Sea
Anchialos
Mesembria
Sozopolis
Kabyle
Beroia
Deultum
Agathopolis
THRACE
Philippoupolis
HAIMIMONTOS
Adrianople
Arkadioupolis
RHODOPE
Hebros
Traianoupolis
EUROPE
Herakleia
Constantinople
Nikomedeia
Nikaia
BITHYNIA
Prousa
Kyzikos
Sestos
Abydos
HELLESPONTOS
Adramyttion
Pergamon
ASIA


SOUTHERN GREECE
Nikopolis
Leukas
Acheloos
Pindos Mountains
AITOLIA
Lamia
Echinos
Hypate
Skarpheia
Thermopylai
Elateia
Opous
Euripos
EUBOIA
Skyros
Chalkis
Porthmos
Aegean Sea
Chios
Ithake
Naupaktos
Delphi
Chaironeia
Koroneia
BOIOTIA
Thebes
Thespiai
Tanagra
Plataiai
Patrai
Aigion
ACHAIA
Kephallenia
Megara
ATTIKE
Karystos
Geraistos
Sikyon
Lechaion
Athens
Elis
Corinth
Isthmos
PELOPONNESE
Andros
Aigina
Tenos
Ikaros
Zakynthos
Alpheios
Argos
Keos
Mykonos
Megalopolis
Tegea
Eurotas
Messene
Sparta
Naxos
Paros
Ionian Sea
Korone
Methone
Asine
Melos
Malea
Kainopolis
(Tainaron)
Thera
Kythera
0 50 mi
0 50 km
Map by Ian Mladjov


BLACK SEA
0 100 mi
0 100 km
Black Sea
Sea of Azov
KUTRIGURS
UTIGURS
ANTAI
TAURIKE
ALANS
ZECHOI
BROUCHOI
ABASGIA
SOUANIA
LAZIKE
TZANIKE
PONTOS
PAPHLAGONIA
BITHYNIA
MOESIA
THRACE
Don
Dnieper
Dniester
Danube
Hebros
Sangarios
Halys
Iris
Boas
Akampsis
Phasis
Turris?
Tomis
Dorostolon
Markianoupolis
Odessos
Mesembria
Anchialos
Beroia
Adrianople
Arkadioupolis
Traianoupolis
Herakleia
Constantinople
Kyzikos
Sestos
Abydos
Adramyttion
Nikomedeia
Nikaia
Dorylaion
Herakleia
Klaudioupolis
Amastris
Gangra
Ankyra
Sinope
Amisos
Amaseia
Ibora
Komana
Neokaisareia
Nikopolis
Themiskourion
Trebizond
Sousourmena
Rizaion
Athens
Satala
Pharangion
Bolon
Apsaros
Petra
Mocheresis
Archaiopolis
Sebastopolis
Tracheia
Pityous
Cherson
Theodosia
Bosporos
Kepoi
Phanagouris
Map by Ian Mladjov

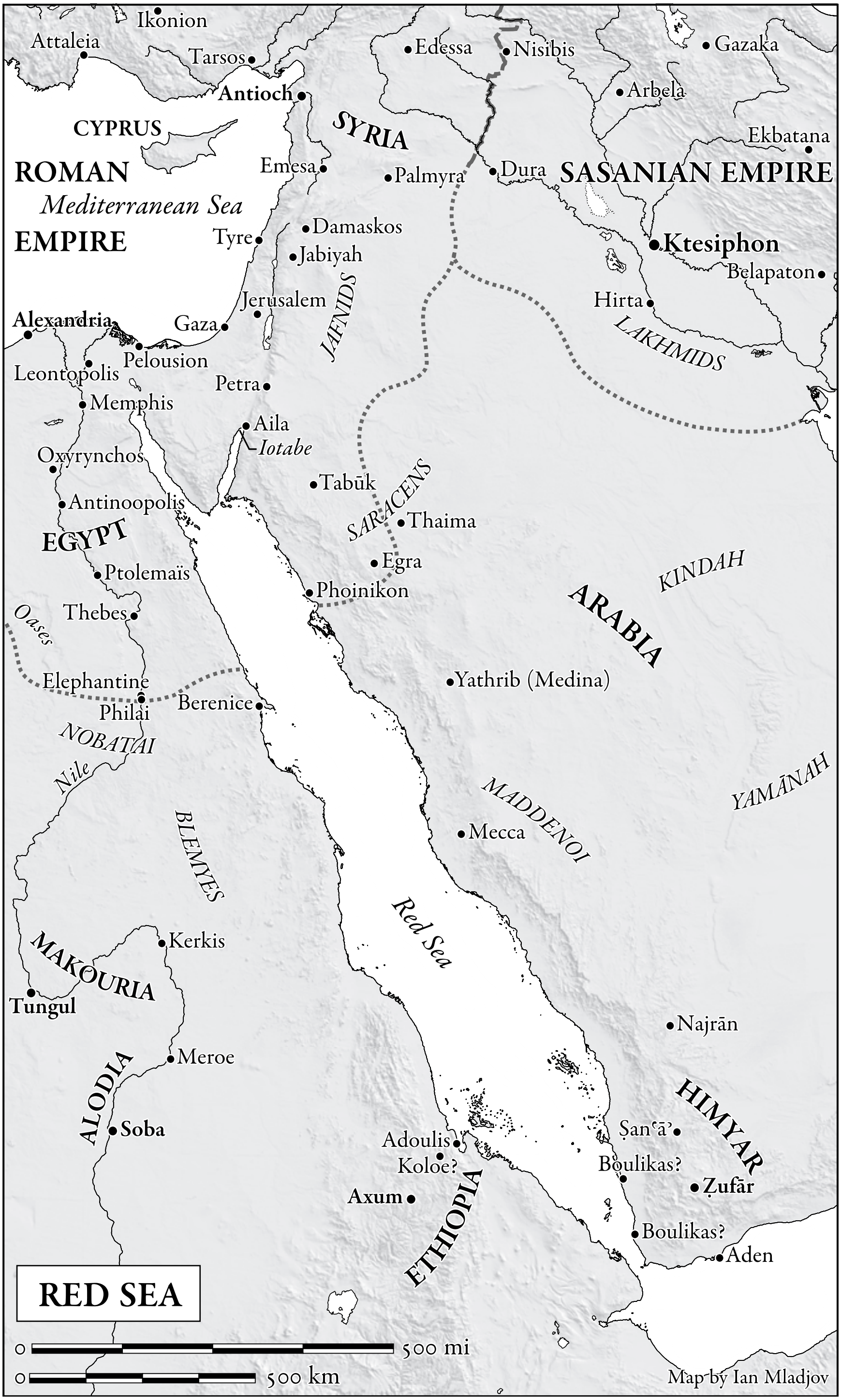

CAUCASIA
0 50 mi
0 50 km
ZECHOI
BROUCHOI
ABASGIA
APSILIA
SOUANIA
SKYMNIA
SABEIROI
ALANS
Caspian Gates?
Darial Pass
Caucasus Mountains
Caspian Gates?
Tzour Pass
Tzour
Caspian Sea
Black Sea
Pityous
Tracheia
Sebastopolis
Tzibile
Archaiopolis
Mocheresis
LAZIKE
Kotaïs
Reon
Skandis
Sarapanis
Phasis
Rodopolis
IBERIA
Mestcheta
Kaspia
Harmozike
Rust'avi
Petra
Apsaros
Akampsis
MESCHOI
Athens
Trebizond
Rizaion
Sousourmena
CHORZIANENE
Kyros
Osika
Shaporan
Samouchis
Kabalaka
ALBANIA
Kamachia
PONTOS
TZANIKE
Boas
Pharangion
Chorsa
Shirakashat
Partav
Nikopolis
Bolon
Armaouira
Kainepolis
Satala
Theodosioupolis
Dvin
Artaxata
Oinochalakon?
P'aytakaran
Kamacha
Eriza
Ioustinianoupolis
Vardanakert
KELESENE
Zaraouana
PERSARMENIA
Araxes
Artaleson
(ROMAN) ARMENIA
Naxouana
Mantzikert
Ashtishat
Arsanios
Kitharizon
TARAUNON
ATROPATENE
Arsamosata
Euphrates
Thospia
Chauon
Melitene
Phison
Attachas
Balouos
Ardabil
Map by Ian Mladjov



SOUTH-WESTERN ASIA
Volga
HUNS
Black Sea
LAZIKE
IBERIA
ALBANIA
Caspian Sea
Araxes
ARMENIA
Ankyra
Trebizond
Sebasteia
Kaisareia
ROMAN
EMPIRE
Amida
Antioch
Nisibis
Euphrates
Tigris
Gazaka
Arbela
MEDIA
DAYLAM
Ray
Dura
Damaskos
Jabiyah
Ekbatana
Nahavand
Seleukeia
Ktesiphon
Antioch of Chosroes
Hirta
JAFNIDS
LAKHMIDS
Susa
Belapaton
Spahan
VAZAÏNE
SASANIAN EMPIRE
Bishapur
Stakhr
Bardasir
KARMANIA
Gur
Daravkart
PERSIS
Valashkart
SARACENS
Egra
ARABIA
Yathrib
(Medina)
Persian Gulf
MAKRAN
Arabian Gulf
CHORAZMIA
Oxos
Laxartes
TÜRKS
Kucha
Chach
Tarim
Kashgar
Bukhara
Samarkand
HEPHTHALITE EMPIRE
Hotan
SOGDIANA
PARTHIA
Gorgo?
HYRKANIA
Nishapur
Marv
Balkh
Varvaliz
BACTRIA
Hindukush
Herat
AREIA
Kabul
Pashkipur
Ghazni
Taxila
Sagala
Himalaya Range
GANDHARA
Thanesar
Ganges
Karkoi
Bast
Indos
Mathura
Kannauj
INDIA
Kauśāmbī
Patala
Ujjain
0 500 mi
0 500 km
Map by Ian Mladjov


MESOPOTAMIA
(ROMAN) ARMENIA
PERSARMENIA
Arsanios
Ashtishat
Kitharizon
TARAUNON
Arsamosata
Chauon
Euphrates
Thospia
Melitene
Phison
Attachas
Balouos
Ingila
SOPHANENE
Martyropolis
Tabriz
Tauros Mountains
Alouaka
Arsameia
ATROPATENE
Amida
Tigranokerta
Tigris
ARZANENE
Charcha
KOMMAGENE
Kepha
Zagros Mountains
Samosata
Ormi
Pinaka
Siphrios
Bezabde
Mindouos
Siraganon
Edessa
Konstantine
Arzamon
Daras
Sisauranon
Gazaka
Zeugma
OSROENE
Ammodios
Nisibis
Peroz-Shapur
Batne
Karrai
Europos
Theodosioupolis
Hierapolis
Balad
U. Zab
MESOPOTAMIA
Singara
Mosil
ADIABENE
Arabana
Arbela
Barbalissos
Soura
Kallinikon
Barbarian Plain
Zenobia
Sergioupolis
Khabur
L. Zab
Hatra
SYRIA
Euphrates
Tigris
Karka
Shenna
Kirkesion
0 50 mi
0 50 km
Map by Ian Mladjov


EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sebasteia
Kamacha
Nyssa
Halys
Kaisareia
KAPPADOKIA
(ROMAN) ARMENIA
Euphrates
Koloneia
Laodikeia
Komana
Melitene
Ikonion
Ariaratheia
Tyana
Saros
Tauros Mountains
Arsameia
LYKAONIA
Germanikeia
KOMMAGENE
Samosata
Derbe
KILIKIA
Anazarbos
OSROENE
Edessa
ISAURIA
Adana
Mopsouestia
Doliche
Zeugma
Tarsos
Batne
Klaudioupolis
Kyrros
Europos
Karrai
Diokaisareia
Alexandretta
Hierapolis
Seleukeia
Traianoupolis
Antioch
Beroia
Gabboulon
Seleukeia
Daphne
Kallinikon
Chalkis
Barbalissos
Soura
Orontes
Laodikeia
SYRIA
Sergioupolis
Apameia
Konstanteia
(Salamis)
CYPRUS
Epiphaneia
Kition
Paphos
Arados
Theodosias
Emesa
Palmyra
Tripolis
Lebanon
STRATA
Helioupolis
Berytos
PHOENICIA
Mediterranean Sea
Sidon
Damaskos
Tyre
Jordan
Jabiyah
Ake
JAFNIDS
Philippoupolis
Scythopolis
Bostra
Kaisareia
PALESTINE
Samaria
Gerasa
Philadelpheia
Jerusalem
(ROMAN) ARABIA
Askalon
Dead Sea
Gaza
Raphia
Betthoro
Pelousion
SARACENS
EGYPT
0 100 mi
0 100 km
Map by Ian Mladjov
Petra
Adroa


RED SEA
Ikonion
Attaleia
Tarsos
Antioch
CYPRUS
ROMAN
EMPIRE
Mediterranean Sea
Edessa
Nisibis
Gazaka
Arbela
Ekbatana
SYRIA
Emesa
Palmyra
Dura
SASANIAN EMPIRE
Damaskos
Tyre
Jabiyah
Ktesiphon
Belapaton
Jerusalem
Hirta
Alexandria
Gaza
JAFNIDS
LAKHMIDS
Leontopolis
Pelousion
Petra
Memphis
Aila
Iotabe
Oxyrynchos
Tabūk
Antinoopolis
SARACENS
Thaima
EGYPT
Egra
Ptolemaïs
KINDAH
Phoinikon
Thebes
ARABIA
Oases
Elephantine
Yathrib (Medina)
Berenice
Philai
NOBATAI
Nile
MADDENOI
YAMĀNAH
BLEMYES
Mecca
Red Sea
Kerkis
MAKOURIA
Tungul
Najrān
Meroe
ALODIA
HIMYAR
Soba
Ṣanʿāʾ
Adoulis
Koloe?
Boulikas?
Axum
Ẓufār
ETHIOPIA
Boulikas?
Aden
0 500 mi
0 500 km
Map by Ian Mladjov


ROMAN AFRICA
Mediterranean Sea
Hippo Diarrhytus
Utica
Mercurium?
Carthage
Clipea
Decimum?
Tricamarum?
Thabraca
Hippo Regius
Rusicade
Igilgili
Saldae
Membresa
Bagradas
Bulla
Mount Papua?
Calama
Constantina
Cuicul
MAURETANIA
Sitifis
AFRICA
Grasse?
Tigisis
Tipasa
Sicca Veneria
Zama
Laribus
NUMIDIA
Zabe
Cellas
Hadrumetum
Leptis Minus
Thapsus
Hermione?
MAMMES
BYZACIUM
Lambaesis
Timgad
Bagaïs
Thubunae
Tebesta
Syllectum
Mount Aurès
Abigas
Sufetula
Caput Vada
Badias
Gemellae
MOORS
Taenae
Capsa
Gulf of Gabès
Tacape
Tipasa
50 mi
50 km
Map by Ian Mladjov


POST-ROMAN GAUL
0 100 mi
0 100 km
Map by Ian Mladjov
BRITAIN
ANGLES
SAXONS
North Sea
FRISIA
SAXONY
VARNI
Rhine
THURINGIA
Cologne
Tournai
AUSTRASIA
Trier
Mainz
Rouen
NEUSTRIA
Soissons
Reims
Metz
Paris
Regensburg
Danube
Strasbourg
ALEMANNI
SWABIA
BAVARIA
ARMORICA
Orléans
Loire
Sens
Angers
Tours
GAUL
Bourges
Autun
Chalon
RAETIA
Chur
Alps
Virunum
NORICUM
LOMBARDS
PANNONIA
Danube
GEPIDS
Poitiers
BURGUNDY
Geneva
Bergamo
Milan
VENETIA
Aquileia
Siscia
Sirmium
Clermont
Lyon
Vienne
Verona
Susa
LIGURIA
Piacenza
Atlantic Ocean
Bordeaux
AQUITAINE
Po
COTTIAN ALPS
EMILIA
Ravenna
Bologna
Rimini
ILLYRIA
DALMATIA
Salona
Rhone
Alps
Apennines
Florence
Ancona
Eauze
Toulouse
GOTHIA
Arles
SPAIN
Pyrenees
Carcassonne
Narbonne
Massalia
TUSCANY
Perugia
Spoleto
Ascoli
Adriatic Sea


NORTHERN ITALY
Alps
Como
Bergamo
Brescia
VENETIA
Aquileia
Treviso
Novara
Milan
Verona
Padua
Sciscia
Sava
ISTRIA
LIGURIA
Po
Pavia
Susa
Turin
Mantua
Piacenza
Po
EMILIA
Tortona
COTTIAN ALPS
Parma
Pola
Modena
ILLYRIA
Bologna
Genoa
Apennines
Ravenna
Forum Cornelii
Faenza
Cesena
DALMATIA
LIBURNIA
Burnum
Luna
Rimini
Monteferetra
Pesaro
Fano
Scardona
Fiesole
Urbino
Pisa
Florence
Senigallia
Salona
Petra
Ancona
Ligurian Sea
Busta Gallorum
Pertusa
Osimo
Muccurum
Laurento
Siena
Arezzo
Taginae
TUSCANY
Lesina
Caprae
Urbisaglia
Fermo
Perugia
Assisi
Populonia
Chiusi
Adriatic Sea
Stagnum
PICENUM
Ascoli
Todi
Orvieto
Spoleto
Bolsena
Narni
CORSICA
SABINA
Tiber
Nepi
Aleria
Corfinio
Centumcellae
Alba
Tyrrhenian Sea
Tivoli
Apennines
Rome
Mt Gargano
Portus
Algidus
Ostia
Albano
SAMNIUM
Cervaro?
Boiano
Anzio
Regata?
0 50 mi
0 50 km
Map by Ian Mladjov


SOUTHERN ITALY
Anzio
Regata?
Mt Circeo
Terracina
Minturno
CAMPANIA
Capua
Benevento
Canosa
Cannae
Bari
APULIA
Naples
Cumae
Nocera
Salerno
Mt Vesuvius
Mons Lactarius
Paestum
Acerenza
Potenza
LUCANIA
Brindisi
Taranto
Otranto
Torre
Olbia
SARDINIA
Cagliari
Sulci
Tyrrhenian Sea
BRUTTIUM
Thurii
Rusciane
Crotone
Skylaion
Vibo
CALABRIA
Aiolian Islands
Ionian Sea
Messina
Reggio
Mediterranean Sea
Palermo
Lilybaeum
Taormina
Mt Aetna
SICILY
Catania
Agrigento
Gela
Syracuse
Camerina
Caucana?
Hippo Diarrhytus
Utica
Mercurium?
Thabraca
Tricamarum?
Carthage
Clipea
AFRICA
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Map by Ian Mladjov

History of the Wars of Justinian

Book One

1. Prokopios of Kaisareia has written the history of the wars which Justinian, the emperor of the Romans, waged against the barbarians of the East and of the West, relating the events of each one in order that the long course of time may not overtake momentous deeds and bury them in oblivion through lack of a record, and thereby cause them to fade away entirely.[1] He believed that the memory of these events would be a great thing and most helpful to men of the present time and to future generations as well, in case time should ever again place them in a similar predicament. [2] For men about to enter upon a war or other kind of struggle may derive some benefit from a narrative of a similar situation in history, inasmuch as it shows the final result obtained by the men of an earlier time in a struggle of the same sort, and hints, at least for those who are most prudent in planning, what outcome present events will probably have. [3] Furthermore, he was aware that he was able to write this history better than anyone else, if for no other reason, because it fell to his lot, when appointed adviser to the general Belisarios, to be an eyewitness of practically all the events to be described. [4] It was his conviction moreover that while cleverness is appropriate to rhetoric and inventiveness to poetry, truth alone is appropriate to history. [5] Accordingly, he has not concealed the shameful deeds of even his most intimate acquaintances,[2] but has written down with complete accuracy everything that happened to all concerned, whether it was done well by them or not.

[6] No greater or mightier deeds are to be found in history than those which occurred in these wars—provided one wishes to base his judgment on the truth. [7] For in them more remarkable feats have been performed than in any other wars of which we know; unless, indeed, a reader of this narrative gives the place of honor to antiquity and considers contemporary achievements unworthy to be deemed remarkable. [8] There are those, for example, who call the soldiers of the present-day "archers," while to those of the most ancient times they wish to attribute such lofty terms as "hand-to-hand warriors," "shield-men," and other names of that sort; and they think that the valor of those times has scarcely survived to the present, an opinion that is both careless and far removed from actual experience of these matters. [9] For the thought has not occurred to them that as regards the archers in Homer, who are ridiculed by this term that is derived from their skill,[3] they were neither carried by horse nor protected by spear or shield.[4] In fact, there was no protection at all for their bodies; they entered battle on foot

1. The opening sentence echoes the opening statements of Herodotos and Thucydides.

2. This alludes sideways to the *Secret History* 1.10, where the same word is used.

3. Homer, *Iliad* 11.385.

4. Homer, *Iliad* 5.192.

and were compelled to conceal themselves, either singling out the shield of a comrade,[5] or seeking safety behind a tombstone on a burial mound,[6] [10] from which position they could neither save themselves in case of a rout nor fall upon an enemy who was in flight. Least of all could they fight out in the open; rather, they always seemed to be stealing something from the men who were engaged in the battle. [11] Apart from this, they were so indifferent in their practice of archery that they drew the bowstring only to the breast,[7] so that the arrow they shot was naturally impotent and harmless against its target.[8] Such, it is evident, was the archery of the past. [12] But archers of the present go into battle fully armored and fitted out with greaves that extend up to the knee.[9] From the right side hang their arrows, from the other a sword. [13] There are some who have a spear also attached to them and, at the shoulders, a sort of small shield without a grip, so as to cover the face and neck. [14] They are excellent horsemen and are able without difficulty to shoot their bows to either side while riding at full speed, and to shoot an opponent whether in pursuit or in flight. [15] They draw the bowstring along by the forehead all the way to the right ear, thereby charging the arrow with such an impetus as to kill whoever stands in its way: neither shields nor breastplates can withstand its force. [16] Still there are those who take little consideration of these things, who revere and worship ancient times and give no credit to modern improvements. But nothing in their position prevents us from concluding that most great and notable deeds have been performed in these wars. [17] Our story will begin a short distance back and recount what befell the Romans and the Medes in their wars, what they achieved and what they suffered.

408 **2.** When Arkadios, the emperor of the Romans, was at the point of death in Byzantion, he had a son, Theodosios, who was still unweaned, and so was at a loss regarding both him and the government, not knowing how to best provide for both. [2] He was worried that, if he provided Theodosios with a partner in power, he would effectively be destroying his own son by bringing forward against him an enemy who would be invested with imperial power; [3] while if he set him alone over the empire, many would try to claim the throne, taking advantage, as they might be expected to do, of the child's helplessness. These men would rebel and, after destroying Theodosios, would usurp power without difficulty, as the boy had no kinsman in Byzantion to be his guardian. [4] For Arkadios had no hope that the boy's uncle, Honorius, would help him, given how bad the situation in Italy was already. [5] He was no less worried by the

5. Homer, *Iliad* 8.267, 11.371.

6. Homer, *Iliad* 4.113.

7. Homer, *Iliad* 4.123.

8. Homer, *Iliad* 11.390.

9. While many historians have taken this passage as emblematic of sixth-century warfare, Prokopios seems to have blended two different types of cavalry, heavily armored cataphracts and horse-archers (*hippotoxotai*). It is not clear that heavily armored cavalry-archers, who could turn in the saddle and fire in reverse, ever existed.



Gold solidus of the Roman emperor Arkadios (Arcadius), and silver dirham of the Persian king Yazdgird I.

attitude of the Medes, fearing that those barbarians would also take advantage of the emperor's youth and do the Romans irreparable harm. [6] When Arkadios was facing this difficult situation, although he was not clever in other matters, he devised a plan that was destined to preserve easily both his son and his throne, either as a result of his conversation with some of the learned men, many of whom are usually found beside an emperor, or from some divine inspiration that came to him. [7] For in drawing up the terms of his will, he designated the child as his successor to the throne but appointed as his guardian Yazdgird [I], the king of the Persians, earnestly pressing upon him in his will the task of preserving the empire for Theodosios by all his power and foresight. [8] So Arkadios died, having thus arranged his family affairs as well as those of the empire. *1 May 408* As for Yazdgird, the king of the Persians, he was widely renowned for his nobility of character even before that time, but when he saw this document that was delivered to him he then displayed a virtue that was at once amazing and remarkable. [9] Loyally observing the behest of Arkadios, he adopted and held without interruption to a policy of profound peace with the Romans, thereby preserving the empire for Theodosios. [10] Indeed, he immediately dispatched a letter to the Roman senate, not declining the office of guardian of the emperor Theodosios and threatening war against any who attempted to plot against him.[10]

[11] When Theodosios [II] had grown to manhood and was in the prime of life, and Yazdgird had been taken from the world by disease, Bahram [V], the king of the Persians,

10. The historicity of this adoption was doubted already by Agathias, *Histories* 4.26.3–8, and is still debated among modern scholars. Malalas, *Chronicle* 13.47, says that Arkadios fell ill and died suddenly, which leaves little room for negotiations with Persia. It has been proposed that they occurred earlier, when, as Prokopios says, Theodosios was an infant. Theophanes, *Chronographia* s.a. 5900 (p. 80), tells the same story but connects it to the arrival of the Persian eunuch Antioch and quotes Yazdgird's letter, so it is possible that he was using Prokopios' source.

invaded the land of the Romans with a large army. However, he did no damage, but
422 and 441 returned to his home without accomplishing anything for the following reason. [12] The emperor Theodosios sent Anatolios, the general of the East, alone as ambassador to the Persians.[11] When he approached the Mede army, alone as he was, he dismounted from his horse and walked on foot toward Bahram. [13] When Bahram saw him, he inquired among those near him who this man was who was approaching, and they replied that he was the general of the Romans. [14] The king was so dumbfounded by this excessive show of respect that he wheeled his horse about and rode away, and the entire Persian army followed him. [15] When he had reached his own territory, he received the ambassador with great cordiality and granted peace on the terms which Anatolios desired of him, on the condition that neither party would construct any new fortification in his own territory near the boundary line between the two sides. When this treaty had been settled, both then continued to administer their own affairs in the way that seemed best to them.

ca. 469 **3.** At a later time, Peroz, the king of the Persians, became involved in a war over boundaries with the nation of the Ephthalitai Huns, whom they call White Huns; he gathered an imposing army and marched against them.[12] [2] The Ephthalitai are a Hunnic people and are called Huns; however, they do not mingle with or neighbor upon any of the Huns known to us, for they occupy a land neither adjoining nor even very near to them. Their territory lies immediately to the north of Persia and their city, called Gorgo, is located near the Persian frontier, and at that point there are frequent contests concerning boundaries between them. [3] They are not nomads like the other Hunnic peoples, but since ancient times have been established in fertile lands. [4] As a result, they have never made any incursion into Roman territory except in company with the army of the Medes. They are the only Huns who have white bodies and faces that are not ugly. [5] It is also true that their lifestyle is unlike that of the Huns, nor do they live a savage life like the Huns do; but they are ruled by one king, and since they possess a lawful polity, they observe right and justice in their dealings both with one another and with their neighbors, no less than the Romans and the Persians do. [6] Moreover, their wealthy citizens attach to themselves up to twenty friends, as the case may be, or more than these, and they become their lifelong banquet-companions and have a share

11. The fifth century was characterized by peace between the two powers, excepting two brief conflicts (420–422, 440–441). Prokopios has fused them, as Bahram was the Persian king in the first and Anatolios the Roman general who arranged peace in the second (some scholars, however, have argued that there was a general Anatolios in the first too). It was the second war that was settled before a major battle when Anatolios offered terms and money.

12. The Ephthalitai were a Central Asian nomadic confederation whose power peaked ca. 500, gaining ascendancy even over Sasanian Persia and parts of the Indian subcontinent. They were known by various names in sources written from Rome to China (e.g., *Chionitae*), before being replaced by the Turks in the mid-sixth century. Prokopios makes them seem as Roman-like as possible. Peroz had actually used them as allies in his war against his brother, from whom he took the throne in 457–459.

in all their property, enjoying a kind of common right in this matter. [7] Then, when the man who has befriended them dies, it is their custom to place all these men alive into the tomb with him.

[8] Peroz, then, marching against these Ephthalitai, was accompanied by an ambassador, Eusebios by name, who, as it happened, had been sent to him by the emperor Zenon. Now the Ephthalitai made it appear to their enemy that they had turned to flight in terrified fear of their attack, and they retreated with all speed to a place that was surrounded on all sides by steep mountains covered by a dense forest of huge trees. [9] Now as one advanced a long way inside the mountains, a broad way appeared in the valley, extending to an indefinite distance, but at the end it had no outlet at all, terminating in this very circle of mountains. [10] So Peroz, with no thought at all of trickery and forgetting that he was marching in hostile territory, pursued them without caution. [11] A few of the Huns fled before him, but the greater part of their force concealed themselves in the rough country and got behind the hostile army; but as yet they desired not to reveal themselves, in order that they might advance well into the trap, get as far as possible in among the mountains, and thus no longer be able to turn back. [12] When the Medes began to realize all this (for they now began to have an inkling of their peril), they kept quiet about the situation themselves through fear of Peroz, yet they earnestly entreated Eusebios to appeal to their king, who was ignorant of his own plight, that he should take counsel rather than make an untimely display of daring, and consider well whether there was any way of safety open to them. [13] So he went before Peroz, but did not reveal their present predicament; instead, he began with a fable, telling how a lion once happened upon a bound goat bleating on a mound of no great height, and how the lion, bent upon making a feast of the goat, rushed forward to seize it, but fell into an extremely deep trench, in which was a circular path, narrow and endless (for it had no outlet anywhere). The owners of the goat had constructed it for this very purpose, and had placed the goat above it to be a snare for the lion. [14] When Peroz heard this, he began to fear that the Medes had brought harm upon themselves by their pursuit of the enemy. He therefore advanced no further but, remaining where he was, began to consider his situation. [15] By this time the Huns were following him openly and were guarding the entrance to the place in order that their enemy might no longer be able to withdraw to the rear. [16] Then at last the Persians saw clearly the perilous position they were in, they felt that their situation was desperate, and had no hope that they would ever escape from the danger. [17] Then the king of the Ephthalitai sent some of his followers to Peroz, reproaching him at length for his foolish daring, by which he had recklessly destroyed both himself and the Persian people; nevertheless, he announced that the Huns would grant them safe passage if Peroz consented to prostrate himself before him, as having proved himself his master, and, taking the oaths that were traditional among them, gave pledges that the Persians would never again march against the nation of the Ephthalitai. [18] When Peroz heard this, he consulted with the magi who were present and asked them whether he must comply with the terms dictated by the enemy. [19] The magi replied that, as to the oath, he should settle the

matter however he deemed best; as for the rest, he should circumvent his enemy by craft. [20] They reminded him that it was the custom among the Persians to prostrate themselves before the rising sun each day. [21] He should, therefore, watch the time closely and meet the leader of the Ephthalitai at dawn so that, turning toward the rising sun, he could make his obeisance. In this way, he would be able in the future to escape the dishonor of the deed. [22] Peroz accordingly gave pledges concerning the peace and prostrated himself before his enemy exactly as the magi had suggested, and so, with the whole Mede army intact, gladly went home.[13]

484 **4.** Not long afterward, disregarding the oath he had sworn, he was eager to avenge himself upon the Huns for the insult done to him. [2] He gathered together from the whole land all the Persians and their allies and led them against the Ephthalitai. He left behind only one of his sons, Kavad by name, who was just past boyhood; all the others, about thirty in number, he took with him. [3] The Ephthalitai, upon learning of his invasion, were outraged at the deception they had suffered from the enemy, and bitterly reproached their king for abandoning them to the Medes. [4] He, with a laugh, asked them whatever of theirs he had abandoned, whether their land, arms, or any other part of their possessions. [5] They replied that he had abandoned nothing except for the one opportunity on which everything else depended. [6] Now the Ephthalitai with all zeal demanded that they go out and meet the invaders, but the king restrained them for the time being. He insisted that they had yet received no definite information about the invasion, for the Persians were still in their own territory. So, remaining where he was, he did the following. [7] In the plain where the Persians were to invade the lands of the Ephthalitai, he marked off a tract of very great extent and made a deep trench of sufficient width; but in the center he left a small part of ground intact, enough to serve as a passageway for ten horses. [8] Over the trench he placed reeds, and upon the reeds he scattered earth, thereby concealing the true surface.[14] He then gave orders to the host of the Huns that, when the time came to withdraw inside the trench, they should draw themselves together into a narrow column and pass slowly across the neck of land, taking care not to fall into the ditch. [9] And he hung from the top of the royal banner the salt over which Peroz had sworn the oath that he had disregarded when he took the

13. Peroz also had to leave his son Kavad behind as a hostage for two years until he paid a large sum of money. The Persian tradition also records that his first defeat at the hands of the Ephthalitai was caused by a stratagem, albeit one involving a self-mutilated false defector who led him into a trap and forced him to sue for peace and promise "never in the future to mount raids against their king"; al-Tabari, *History* 874–76 (pp. 113–15), who names the Ephthalite king Akhshunvar. Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 8–10, says that the Romans were giving money to Peroz to fight the Huns: he was captured in his first attack, and the emperor Zenon helped him to pay the ransom. Peroz agreed never to invade again. He was defeated in his second invasion, and that was when he left Kavad as a hostage. Our sources differ on whether there were two or three attacks total, but Prokopios recounts the last one.

14. Cf. the Phokian stratagem in Herodotos, *Histories* 8.28.

field against the Huns. [10] Now as long as he heard that the enemy were in their own territory, he remained at rest, but when he learned from his scouts that they had reached the city of Gorgo that lies on the Persian border, and that departing from there they were now advancing against him, he himself with the greater part of his army remained inside the trench but he sent forward a few men with orders to be seen at a distance by the enemy in the plain and, once they had been seen, to flee at full speed to the rear, keeping in mind his instruction concerning the trench as soon as they drew near to it. [11] They did as directed and, as they approached the trench, they drew themselves into a narrow column and all passed over and joined the rest of the army. [12] But the Persians, having no means of perceiving the stratagem, gave chase at full speed across the level plain, furious at the enemy, and all of them fell into the trench, not just the first ranks but also those who followed in the rear. [13] For they had entered into the pursuit with great fury, as was said, and utterly failed to notice the catastrophe that struck the front ranks, but fell in on top of them with their horses and lances, and so naturally killed them and were themselves no less destroyed.[15] [14] Among them were Peroz and all his sons. Just as he was about to fall into this pit, they say that he realized the danger, and seized and threw away the pearl that hung from his right ear—a gleaming white gem, greatly prized on account of its extraordinary size—in order, no doubt, so that no one could wear it after him. For it was extremely beautiful to behold, and no king before him had possessed its like. But this story seems untrustworthy to me. [15] A man who finds himself in such peril would be thinking of nothing else but his predicament. I suppose that his ear was cut off in this disaster, and the pearl was lost somewhere or other. [16] The emperor of the Romans made every effort to buy this pearl from the Ephthalitai, but was unsuccessful. For the barbarians were not able to find it though they made a great effort. However, they say that the Ephthalitai found it later and sold it to Kavad. [17] The story of this pearl, as told by the Persians, is worth recounting, for perhaps to some it may not seem altogether incredible.[16]

[18] The Persians, then, say that this pearl was lodged in its oyster in the sea that washes the Persian coast,[17] and the oyster was swimming not far from the shore there; its valves were standing open on both sides and the pearl lay between them, a wonderful sight and notable, for no pearl in all history could be compared to it at all, either in size or in beauty. [19] A shark, then, of enormous size and dreadful fierceness, fell in love with this sight and stalked it, leaving it neither day nor night; even when he had to look for food, he would only look about for something eatable where he was, and when he found some bit, he would snatch it up and eat it quickly; then, overtaking the oyster immediately, he would take his fill again of the sight that he adored. [20] At

15. In al-Tabari, *History* 876–79 (pp. 115–19), Peroz's army also falls into a ditch (two versions are given as to how that happened), and the Ephthalite king also affixes the previous treaty to the tip of a lance.

16. Prokopios' tale of the pearl of Peroz was cited by many later Byzantine writers as a moral exemplum.

17. The Persian Gulf was an important source of pearls throughout antiquity.

length a fisherman, they say, noticed what was happening, but in terror of the monster he recoiled from the danger; however, he reported the whole matter to king Peroz. [21] When Peroz heard his account, they say that a great longing for the pearl came over him, and he urged on this fisherman with many flatteries and hopes of reward. [22] Unable to resist the lord's requests, they say that he addressed Peroz as follows:

fisherman to Peroz

> My master, precious to a man is money, more precious still is his life, but most prized of all are his children. [23] Because of his love for them a man is compelled by nature and might perhaps dare anything. Now I intend to make trial of the monster and hope to make you the master of the pearl. [24] If I succeed in this struggle, it is plain that I will be ranked among the blessed. For it is likely that you, being the king of kings, will reward me with all the good things; and for me it will be sufficient, even if it should happen that I gain no reward, to have shown myself a benefactor of my master. [25] But if it turns out that I am devoured by this monster, it will be your responsibility, O king, to compensate my children for their father's death. [26] Thus even after my death I will still be a wage-earner for those closest to me, and you will win greater fame for your goodness. In helping my children you will do well by me, who will have no power to thank you for the benefit. For generosity is purest only when it is displayed toward the dead.

With these words he departed. [27] When he came to the place where the oyster was accustomed to swim and the shark to follow, he sat on a rock, watching for a chance to catch the pearl alone without its admirer. [28] As soon as it came about that the shark found something that would serve it for food, and was busy with it, the fisherman left on the beach those who were following him for this service, and made straight for the oyster with all his might. Already he had seized it and was hastening with all speed to get out of the water, when the shark noticed him and rushed to the rescue. [29] The fisherman saw him and, as he was about to be caught not far from the beach, he hurled his catch with all his force to the land, and was himself soon afterward seized and destroyed. [30] But the men who had been left upon the beach picked up the pearl and, conveying it to the king, reported all that had happened. [31] Such, then, is the story that the Persians relate concerning this pearl, just as I have set it down. But I return to the previous narrative.

[32] Thus were Peroz and the whole Persian army destroyed. The few who by chance did not fall into the ditch found themselves in enemy hands. [33] As a result of this experience a law was established among the Persians that, while marching in hostile territory, they should never give chase in pursuit, even if the enemy had been driven back by force. [34] Those who had not marched with Peroz and had remained in their own land chose as their king Kavad, the youngest son of Peroz, who was the only one surviving. [35] At that time, then, the Persians became subject and tributary to the Ephthalitai, until Kavad had established his power securely and no longer agreed to pay the annual tribute to them. These barbarians, then, ruled over the Persians for two years.[18]

18. In fact, it seems that the Sasanians paid tribute to the Ephthalitai down to the reign of Chosroes.

5. As time went on, however, Kavad became more violent as a ruler, and introduced innovations into the polity, including a law that he promulgated that Persians should have communal intercourse with their women, which by no means pleased the common people. Accordingly they rose up against him, deposed him from command, and kept him in prison in chains.[19] [2] They then chose Balash, the brother of Peroz, to be *496* their king since, as has been said, no male offspring of Peroz was left and it is not lawful among the Persians for any man of common birth to be set on the throne, except in case the royal family went completely extinct.[20] [3] Upon receiving the royal power, Balash gathered together the nobles of the Persians and held a conference concerning Kavad, for the majority did not wish to put the man to death. [4] After many opinions had been expressed on both sides, there came forward a man of repute among the Persians whose name was Gousanastades, whose office was that of *kanarang* (this would be the Persian term for a general); his command lay on the very frontier of the Persian territory in the district adjoining the land of the Ephthalitai. Holding up his knife, the kind with which the Persians trim their nails, about the length of a man's finger but not one-third as wide as a finger, [5] he said: "You see this knife, how extremely small it is; nevertheless it is able at the present time to accomplish a deed, which, be assured, my dear Persians, a little later two myriads of armored men would be unable to achieve." [6] He said this hinting that, if they did not kill Kavad, he would soon cause trouble for the Persians. [7] But they were unwilling to put to death a man of the royal blood and decided to confine him in a castle which they called the "Prison of Oblivion."[21] [8] For if anyone is cast into it, the law permits no mention of him to be made thereafter, but death is the penalty for the man who speaks his name; for this reason it has received this title among the Persians. [9] On one occasion, however, the *History of the Armenians* relates that the operation of the law regarding the Prison of Oblivion was suspended for the Persians in the following way.[22]

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19. Kavad sided with the Mazdakite sect, which was pushing for reforms resembling what Prokopios reports, though its demands did not peak until the reign of Chosroes (Mazdak was a contemporary Zoroastrian prophet). The movement, whose nature and objectives remain obscure, seems to have enjoyed popular support and to have been resisted by the nobility, which deposed Kavad. See also pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 20, 22, for a contemporary report; cf. al-Tabari, *History* 893–94 (pp. 148–49).

20. Actually, Balash, Peroz's brother, had ruled in 484–488, before Kavad deposed and blinded him, with help from the Ephthalitai. When Kavad was deposed in 496 because of his support for the Mazdakites, he was replaced by his own brother Zamasp (r. 496–498); Agathias, *Histories* 4.28.2, using Persian sources, got that right.

21. Located in Khuzestan province (just northwest of the Persian Gulf). Ammianus Marcellinus called this fortress Agabana (*Res Gestae* 27.12.3). Prokopios' Armenian source (see below) calls it Anush or Anyush.

22. It is not initially clear whether Prokopios is referring to Armenian history or to a text, *History of the Armenians*, but 1.5.40 clinches the second interpretation. We have a text that is somehow related to the *History* that Prokopios used; because of a misreading it was formerly attributed to a certain Faustus of Byzantium, but is now called the *Epic Histories* and was written

[10] There was once a truceless war between the Persians and the Armenians lasting for thirty-two years, when Pakourios was king of the Persians and Arsakes of the Armenians, of the line of the Arsakids.[23] The war was prolonged and it came about that both sides suffered terribly, and especially the Armenians. [11] But each side was so greatly distrustful of the other that neither could make overtures of peace to the other. In the meantime, it happened that the Persians became engaged in a war against other barbarians who lived not far from the Armenians.[24] [12] The Armenians, in their eagerness to display their goodwill and desire for peace to the Persians, decided to invade the land of these barbarians, informing the Persians of this in advance. [13] Then they fell upon them unexpectedly and killed almost the whole population, old and young alike. Pakourios was overjoyed at the deed and sent certain of his trusted men to Arsakes, giving him pledges of security and inviting him to his presence. [14] When Arsakes came to him, he showed him every kindness and treated him as a brother on an equal footing with himself. [15] Then he bound him by the most solemn oaths and he himself swore likewise that Persians and Armenians should henceforth be friends and allies to each other; he then dismissed Arsakes to return to his own country.

[16] Not long after this, certain persons slandered Arsakes, saying that he was planning to undertake sedition. Pakourios was persuaded by these men and again summoned Arsakes, intimating that he was anxious to confer with him on general matters.[25] [17] Suspecting nothing, he came to the king, taking with him several of the most warlike Armenians, among them Vasak, his general and counselor, for he was both extremely brave and wise. [18] Straightway, then, Pakourios heaped reproach and abuse upon both Arsakes and Vasak because, disregarding the sworn agreement, they had so speedily decided to rebel. But they denied the charge and swore most insistently that no such thing had been considered by them. [19] At first, therefore, Pakourios kept them under guard in disgrace, but after a time he asked the magi what should be done with them. [20] The magi did not deem it just to condemn men who denied their guilt and had not been explicitly found guilty, but they suggested to him an artifice by which Arsakes himself might be compelled to become openly his own accuser. [21] They told him to cover the floor of the royal tent with earth, one half from the land of Persia and the other half from Armenia. The king did accordingly. [22] Then the magi, after putting the whole tent under a spell, instructed the king to take his walk there in company with Arsakes, reproaching him meanwhile with having violated the sworn agreement. [23] They said, furthermore, that they too must be present at the conversation, for in this

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by an anonymous Armenian in the later fifth century. It is a not-entirely historical account of Armenian wars between Rome and Persia. See also *Buildings* 3.1.6 for another possible reference to this text.

23. There was no Persian king “Pakourios.” This is possibly a corruption of Shapur II (309–379), the king in the *Epic Histories*. Arsakes is Arshak II of Armenia.

24. Prokopios is here loosely following the *Epic Histories* 4.20. That text mentions Greeks, i.e., Romans, as the enemy of the Persians, which Prokopios has interestingly changed to “barbarians.”

25. Prokopios now jumps ahead to *Epic Histories* 4.53–54.

way there would be witnesses of all that was said. Pakourios immediately summoned Arsakes and began to walk to and fro with him in the tent in the presence of the magi. He asked the man why he had disregarded his sworn promises and was attempting to inflict such grievous harm upon the Persians and Armenians once more. [24] Now as long as the conversation took place on the parts that were covered by the earth from the land of Persia, Arsakes continued to deny the charge and, pledging himself with the most fearful oaths, insisted that he was a faithful subject of Pakourios. [25] But when, in the midst of his speaking, he came to the center of the tent where they stepped upon the Armenian earth, then, compelled by I know not what power, he suddenly changed the tone of his words to one of defiance, and from then on threatened Pakourios and the Persians, announcing that he would have vengeance upon them for this insolence as soon as he became his own master. [26] He continued to say these things and threaten rebellion as they walked all the way until, turning back, he came again to the earth from the Persian land. Thereupon, as if chanting a recantation, he was once more a suppliant, offering pitiable excuses to Pakourios. [27] But when he came again to the Armenian earth, he returned to his threats. In this way he changed many times to one side and the other, and concealed none of his secrets. [28] Then at length the magi passed judgment against him as having violated the treaty and the oaths. Pakourios flayed Vasak, made a bag of his skin, filled it with chaff, and hung it from a tall tree. [29] As for Arsakes, given that he could not bring himself to kill a man of the royal blood, he confined him in the Prison of Oblivion.

[30] After a time, when the Persians were marching against some barbarian nation, they were accompanied by an Armenian who had been especially close with Arsakes and had followed him when he went into the Persian land.[26] This man proved himself a capable warrior in this campaign, as Pakourios observed his deeds, and was the chief cause of the Persian victory. [31] For this reason Pakourios authorized him to make any request he wished, assuring him that he would be refused nothing by him. [32] The Armenian asked for nothing else than that he might for one day pay homage to Arsakes in the way he might desire. [33] Now it annoyed the king extremely that he should be compelled to relax a law so ancient; however, in order to be wholly true to his word, he granted the request. [34] When the man found himself by the king's order in the Prison of Oblivion, he greeted Arsakes and both men, embracing each other, joined their voices in a sweet lament and, bewailing the hard fate that was upon them, were barely able to release each other from their embrace. [35] Then, when they had sated themselves with weeping and stopped, the Armenian bathed Arsakes and completely adorned his person, neglecting nothing, and, putting on him the royal attire, led him to recline on a bed of rushes. [36] Then Arsakes entertained those present royally, just as was formerly his custom. [37] During the feast many speeches were made over the cups that greatly pleased Arsakes, and many other things happened in their company that

26. Prokopios now jumps ahead to *Epic Histories* 5.7. His anonymous Armenian is there called the eunuch Drastamat.

delighted him. The drinking lasted until nightfall, as all took the keenest delight in their conversation; at length they parted with great reluctance, and separated thoroughly drenched with happiness. [38] Then they tell how Arsakes said that, after spending the sweetest day of his life and enjoying the company of the man he had missed most of all, he would no longer willingly endure the miseries of his life; [39] and with these words, they say, he killed himself with a knife which, as it happened, he had purposely stolen at the banquet, and thus departed from among men. [40] Such is the story concerning Arsakes, related in the *History of the Armenians* just as I have told it, and that was the occasion when the law regarding the Prison of Oblivion was relaxed. But I must now return to the point from which I have digressed.

6. While Kavad was imprisoned he was cared for by his wife, who went in to him constantly and brought him supplies. Now the warden of the prison began to make advances on her, for she was extremely beautiful to look upon. [2] When Kavad learned this from his wife, he instructed her to give herself over to the man to be treated as he wished. In this way the warden of the prison took the woman to bed and he conceived for her a passionate love. [3] As a result, he permitted her to go in to her husband at will and to depart from there again without interference from anyone. Now there was a Persian noble named Siyavush, a devoted friend of Kavad, [4] who was constantly in the vicinity of this prison, watching for an opportunity to get him out of there. [5] He sent word to Kavad through his wife that he was keeping horses and men in readiness not far from the prison, and indicated the spot to him. [6] Then one day as night drew near Kavad persuaded his wife to give him her own clothes and, dressing herself in his clothes, to sit instead of him in the prison where he usually sat. [7] In this way, then, Kavad made his escape from the prison. For although the guards who were on duty saw him, they supposed that it was the woman and so decided not to stop or otherwise harass him. [8] At daybreak they saw in the cell the woman in her husband's clothes, and were so completely deceived as to think that Kavad was there. This belief prevailed for several days, until Kavad had traveled a long distance. [9] As to the fate that befell the woman after the stratagem had come to light and the manner in which they punished her, I am unable to say with accuracy.[27] For the Persian accounts do not agree with each other, and for this reason I omit the narration of them.

[10] Kavad, together with Siyavush, escaped detection and finally reached the Ephthalitai Huns. There the king gave him his daughter in marriage and, as Kavad was
498 now his son-in-law, he sent him against the Persians with a formidable army.[28] [11] The Persians were unwilling to meet this army in battle, and they fled in every direction. [12] When Kavad reached the territory where Gousanastades held command, he

27. The eastern sources relate Kavad's escape in similar terms; see, e.g., al-Tabari, *History* 887 (p. 135), in which he is rescued by his sister, not his wife.

28. Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 24, says that while among the Ephthalitai Kavad married the daughter of his own sister, who had been captured by the Ephthalitai in the war in which his father Peroz was killed.

stated to some of his friends that he would appoint as *kanarang* the first man of the Persians who came into his presence on that day and offered his services. [13] But even as he said this, he regretted it, for he remembered a law which forbade the Persians from conferring offices upon those who were not entitled to them by right of birth. [14] He feared that someone would come to him first who was not a kinsman of the present *kanarang*, and that he would be compelled to relax the law in order to keep his word. [15] As he was considering this matter, chance brought it about that, without dishonoring the law, he could still keep his word. For the first man who came to him happened to be Adurgundad, a young man who was a relative of Gousanastades and an especially capable warrior. [16] He addressed Kavad as "Lord" and was the first to do obeisance to him as king, and begged to be used by him as a slave for any service whatever. [17] So Kavad made his way into the royal palace without any trouble and, finding Balash abandoned by all his defenders, put out his eyes, using the method of blinding commonly used by the Persians on criminals, that is, either by heating olive oil and pouring it, while it was still boiling fiercely, into the wide-open eyes, or by heating an iron needle in the fire and piercing the eyeballs with it. Thereafter Balash was kept in confinement, having ruled over the Persians for two years.[29] [18] Kavad also executed Gousanastades and replaced him with Adurgundad in the office of *kanarang*, while Siyavush was immediately proclaimed *adrastadaran salanes*.[30] This designated the man in command over all magistrates and the entire army. [19] Siyavush was the first and only man who held this office among the Persians; for it was conferred on no one before or after that time. The kingdom was strengthened by Kavad and guarded securely; for in shrewdness and energy he was surpassed by none.

7. A little later Kavad owed the king of the Ephthalitai money that he was unable to pay, and so he asked Anastasios, the emperor of the Romans, to lend him this money. Anastasios conferred with some of his associates and asked them whether this should be done.[31] [2] They would not permit him to make the loan. For, as they pointed out, it was inexpedient to make more secure by means of their own money the friendship between their enemies and the Ephthalitai, seeing as it better for them if those two were as much as possible at odds with each other. [3] It was for this reason, and no just cause, that Kavad decided to march against the Romans. First he invaded the land of *Aug. 502*

29. Agathias, *Histories* 4.28.7, relying on Persian sources, says that Zamasp abdicated and was apparently not harmed. Prokopios has in any case confused Zamasp with Kavad's uncle and predecessor Balash.

30. The Persian term was probably *arteshtaran salar*, "chief of warriors."

31. Kavad had sent an elephant and a request for gold to Anastasios in 491, but the emperor refused. Kavad threatened war, but Anastasios asked for the return of Nisibis. This led to a large Armenian rebellion against Kavad, who had been imposing Zoroastrianism on them. Anastasios, however, did not accept the overtures of the Armenians (pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 19–21). This was all before Kavad was deposed.

the Armenians, moving fast to anticipate the news of his coming,[32] and after plundering the greater part of it in a rapid campaign he unexpectedly arrived at the city of Amida, *Oct. 502* which is situated in Mesopotamia. Although the season was winter, he besieged the town. [4] Now the people of Amida had no soldiers at hand, seeing that it was a time of peace and prosperity, and in other respects they were utterly unprepared; still, they were unwilling to yield to the enemy and showed an unexpected fortitude in enduring dangers and hardship.

[5] Now there was among the Syrians a certain just man, Iakobos by name, who was very focused on the practice of religion. This man had confined himself many years before in a place called Endielon, a day's journey from Amida, in order to devote himself to worship with the fewest distractions. [6] The men of this place, assisting his purpose, had surrounded him with a kind of fencing that was not compact but spaced out, so that those who approached could see and speak with him. [7] They had also constructed for him a small roof over his head, sufficient to keep off the rain and snow. There this man had been sitting for a long time, never yielding either to the heat or cold and surviving on certain seeds that he was accustomed to eat not, indeed, every day but at long intervals. [8] Now some of the Ephthalitai who were overrunning the country thereabout saw this Iakobos and with great eagerness drew their bows to shoot at him. But the hands of every one of them became motionless and utterly unable to manage the bow. [9] When this was reported through the army and came to the ears of Kavad, he desired to see the thing for himself and, when he saw it, both he and the Persians who were with him were seized with great astonishment, and he entreated Iakobos to forgive the barbarians for their crime. He forgave them with a word and the men were released from their distress. [10] Kavad then urged the man to ask for whatever he wished, supposing that he would ask for a great sum of money, and he recklessly added that he would refuse nothing. [11] But he requested that Kavad grant to him all the men who might come to him during that war as fugitives. Kavad granted this request and gave him a written pledge of his personal safety. And great numbers of men came flocking to him from all sides and found safety there, for the deed became widely known. Thus, then, did these things take place.

[12] Kavad, in besieging Amida, brought the engines known as rams against every part of the circuit-wall, but the people of Amida would always foil the attacks by means of oblique beams.[33] Kavad did not let up until he realized that the wall could not be taken in this way. [13] For although he attacked the wall many times, he was unable to break down any part of it or even to shake it, so secure had been the work of the builders who had constructed it long before. [14] Failing in this, Kavad raised an artificial

32. Kavad took the city of Theodosioupolis, the capital of Armenia Interior (pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 48; *Buildings* 3.5.3; pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 7.3b).

33. Cf. the siege of Plataiai in Thucydides, *History* 2.76.4. More detailed accounts of this siege can be found in our earliest source, pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 50–53 (including other operations in the war elsewhere), and our longest narrative, pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 7.3c–4f. It is possible that the latter and Prokopios were drawing on a common Greek source, now lost, on the siege.

hill to attack the city, considerably overtopping the wall; but the besieged, starting from inside their defenses, made a tunnel extending under the hill and from there stealthily carried out the earth, until they hollowed out a great part of the inside of the hill. However, the outside kept its original form and gave no sign of what was being done. [15] Therefore, many Persians climbed it, thinking it safe, and stationed themselves on the summit with the intention of shooting down upon the heads of those inside the circuit. But with the great mass of men crowding upon it with a rush, the hill suddenly fell in and killed almost all of them. [16] Kavad, then, was at a loss facing this situation and decided to raise the siege; he issued orders to the army to retreat on the next day. [17] Then indeed the besieged, thinking little of their danger, began to jeer and laugh at the barbarians from atop the walls. [18] In addition, some courtesans shamelessly drew up their clothing and displayed to Kavad, who was standing close by, those parts of a woman's body that it is not proper for men to see uncovered. [19] When the magi saw this they came before the king and prevented the retreat because they interpreted what had happened as that the people of Amida would soon reveal to Kavad all their secret and hidden things. So the Persian army remained there.

[20] Not many days later one of the Persians saw near one of the towers the outlet of an old sewer passage, which was insecurely concealed with a few small stones. [21] He came there alone at night and, testing the entrance, got inside the circuit-wall; then, at daybreak, he reported the whole matter to Kavad. The king himself on the following night came to the spot with a few men, bringing ladders that he had made ready. And he was favored by the following piece of good fortune: [22] the defense of the very tower which happened to be nearest to the sewer had fallen by lot to those of the Christians who are most strict in their observances, whom they call monks. These men, as chance would have it, were keeping some annual religious festival to God on that day. [23] When night came on they all felt great weariness on account of the festival and, heavy with more food and drink than they were used to, they fell into a sweet and gentle sleep and were consequently unaware of what was going on. [24] So the Persians made their way through the sewer inside the walls, a few at a time, and, mounting the tower, found the monks still sleeping and killed them to a man.[34] [25] When Kavad learned this, he brought his ladders up to the wall close by this tower. [26] It was already day.[35] Those of the people of Amida who were keeping guard on the adjoining tower became aware of the disaster and ran there with all speed to give assistance. [27] Then for a long time both sides struggled to push back the other, and already the townsmen were

34. Pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 4a, names the monastery (Yuhannan of Urtaye) and claims that their abbot was a Persian. Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 53, does not name the monastery but says that some people (not he) suspected treachery; that view is reflected in Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 501/502 ("betrayed with the connivance of its monks"). Yuhannan of Amida later spoke with a survivor of the siege, a monk from that monastery whose community was butchered and broken up by the Persians, and he had settled in Palestine; *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, vol. 19, 217–21.

35. This fight on the wall actually lasted for three days; Prokopios has telescoped events.

gaining the advantage, killing many of those who had mounted the wall and throwing back the men on the ladders, and they came very near to averting the danger. [28] But Kavad drew his sword and, terrifying the Persians constantly with it, rushed in person to the ladders and would not let them draw back; death was the penalty for those who dared to turn back. [29] As a result, the Persians by their numbers gained the upper hand and overcame their enemies in the fight. So the city was taken by force on the
11 Jan. 503 eightieth day after the beginning of the siege. [30] There followed a great massacre of the townspeople until one of them—an old man and a priest—approached Kavad as he was riding into the city and said that it was not a kingly act to slaughter captives. [31] Kavad, still angry, replied: "But why did you decide to fight against me?" The old man answered quickly: "Because God willed to give Amida to you not by our decision but by your valor." [32] Kavad was pleased by these words and permitted no further killing, but he instructed the Persians to plunder the money and enslave the survivors, and he directed them to choose out for himself all the notables among them.

[33] A short time after this he departed, leaving there a thousand men under the command of Glones, a Persian, to garrison the place and some few unfortunates among the people of Amida who were to serve the daily needs of the Persians;[36] he himself with the rest of the army and the captives marched homeward. [34] These captives were treated by Kavad with a generosity befitting a king; for after a short time he released all of them to return to their homes, but he pretended that they had escaped from him by stealth.[37] [35] The emperor of the Romans, Anastasios, also showed them honor worthy of their bravery, for he remitted to the city all the annual taxes for the duration of seven years and gave them many valuable gifts, both all of them collectively and each one separately, so that they came to forget the misfortunes that had befallen them. But this happened in later years.

8. At that time the emperor Anastasios, upon learning that Amida was being besieged,
May 503 dispatched with all speed an army of sufficient strength. While each company had its own commander, there were four generals in charge of the whole army: Areobindos, at that time general of the East, the son-in-law of Olybrius, who had been emperor in the West not long before; [2] Keler, commander of the palace guard (this officer the Romans conventionally call *magister*); and in addition to these there were the commanders of the soldiers in Byzantion, Patrikios the Phrygian and Hypatios, the nephew of the emperor. These four, then, were the generals. [3] With them was also Justin, who later became emperor upon the death of Anastasios, and Patrikiolos with his son Vitalianos, who raised an armed rebellion against the emperor Anastasios not long afterward and tried to usurp power;[38] also Pharesmanes, a native of Kolchis and a man

36. The other sources say that a garrison of three thousand men was left behind.

37. Cf. Pausanias in Thucydides, *History* 1.128.5.

38. Vitalianos rebelled against Anastasios in 513 and held large parts of the Balkans provinces until the emperor's death in 518. He made peace with the regime of Justin but was murdered

of exceptional ability as a warrior, and the Goths Godidisklos and Bessas, who were among those Goths who had not followed Theoderic when he went from Thrace into Italy,[39] both of them men of the noblest birth and experienced in war; and many others, too, who were men of high station accompanied this army. [4] For such an army, they say, was never assembled by the Romans against the Persians either before or after that. However, all these men did not assemble in one body nor did they form a single army as they marched, but each commander by himself led his own division separately against the enemy. [5] And as manager of the finances of the army Apion, an Egyptian, was sent, a man of eminence among the patricians and extremely energetic. In a written statement, the emperor had declared him a partner in the imperial power, in order that he might have authority to administer the finances as he saw fit.[40]

[6] This army was mustered with considerable delay and advanced at leisure. As a result they did not find the barbarians in Roman territory, for the Persians had made their attack suddenly and had immediately withdrawn with all their booty to their own land. [7] Now no one of the generals desired for the present to undertake the siege of the garrison left in Amida, for they learned that they had carried in a large supply of provisions, but they were eager to invade the land of the enemy. [8] However, they did not advance together against the barbarians but encamped apart from one another as they proceeded. When Kavad learned this (for he happened to be close by), he came with all speed to the Roman frontier and confronted them. [9] The Romans had not yet learned that Kavad was moving against them with his whole force and supposed that some small Persian army was there. [10] Accordingly, the forces of Areobindos encamped at a place called Arzamon, at a distance of two days' journey from the city of Konstantine, while those of Patrikios and Hypatios at a place called Siphrios, which is distant not less than 350 stades from the city of Amida. As for Keler, he had not yet arrived.

[11] When Areobindos ascertained that Kavad was coming against them with his whole army, he left his camp and, together with all his men, turned to flight and withdrew on the run to Konstantine.[41] [12] The enemy came up not long after and took the camp without a man in it and all the money it contained. From there they advanced swiftly against the other Roman army. [13] Now the soldiers of Patrikios and Hypatios *Aug.*
had happened upon eight hundred Ephthalitai who were marching in advance of the *503*

in the palace in 520, some said at the instigation of Justinian (*Secret History* 6.28, among other sources). His nephew Ioannes was a leading general under Justinian and appears often in the *Wars*.

39. 5.1.9–14.

40. Apion, an Egyptian notable, held the titular rank of praetorian prefect of the East; Prokopios' phrasing of his office seems to have been copied by Ioannes Lydos, *On the Magistracies* 3.17.

41. Detailed accounts of these operations are provided by pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 55; and Theophanes, *Chronographia* a.m. 5997 (p. 146). Areobindos chased the Persians away from Nisibis, but then asked Patrikios and Hypatios at Amida to reinforce him. They did not, and he was pushed back by Kavad.

Persian army, and had killed practically all of them.[42] [14] As they had learned nothing of Kavad and the Persian army and had won a victory, they began to conduct themselves with less caution. They had stacked their arms and were preparing a lunch for themselves, for already the appropriate time of day was drawing near. [15] Now a small stream flowed in this place and in it the Romans began to wash the meat that they were about to eat. [16] Some, too, distressed by the heat, were bathing in the stream and in consequence the water of the stream was disturbed as it flowed onwards. Kavad had learned what had befallen the Ephthalitai and was advancing against the enemy with all speed. [17] He noticed that the water of the brook was disturbed and, guessing what was going on, concluded that his opponents were unprepared and gave orders to charge upon them immediately at full speed. Straightway, then, they fell upon them feasting and unarmed. [18] The Romans did not withstand their charge nor think of resistance, but they began to flee as each one could. Some of them were captured and slain while others climbed the hill that rises there and threw themselves down the cliff in fear and much confusion. [19] They say that not a man escaped from there, although Patrikios and Hypatios had succeeded in getting away at the beginning of the charge.[43] After this, Kavad withdrew homeward with his whole army, as hostile Huns had invaded his land, and with this people he waged a long war in the northern part of his realm.[44] [20] In the meantime, the other Roman army also came but did nothing worth recounting because, it seems, no one was made commander in chief of the expedition. All the generals were of equal rank and so they were always opposing one another's opinions and were utterly unwilling to unite. [21] Keler, however, with his contingent, crossed the Nymphios river and made some sort of an invasion into Arzanene. [22] This river is very close to Martyropolis, about three hundred stades from Amida.[45] So they plundered the country thereabout and returned not long after, and the whole invasion was completed in a short time.

9. After this Areobindos went to Byzantion summoned by the emperor, while the oth-
504 ers reached Amida and, in spite of the winter season, besieged it.[46] They made many attempts but were unable to take the place by storm, although they were on the point of doing so through starvation, for all the provisions of the besieged were exhausted. [2] The generals, however, had ascertained nothing of the difficulty in which the enemy were. As they saw that their own soldiers were distressed by the siege and the winter weather, and at the same time suspected that a Persian army would soon be coming against them, they were eager to leave the place on any terms. [3] The Persians, for their

42. The armies of Patrikios and Hypatios had left Amida to reinforce Areobindos, but they failed to meet up; they were met by the Persians at Opadna (or Apadna).

43. Ioannes Lydos, *On the Magistracies* 3.53, accuses them of cowardice and inexperience.

44. On his return, Kavad tried but failed to take Konstantine (see *Wars* 2.13.8–15), and also failed to extort money from and capture Edessa.

45. The modern river Batman, a major tributary of the Tigris.

46. Prokopios here omits many operations that took place in 504, especially by Keler and Areobindos, and concentrates instead on Amida.

part, not knowing what would become of them in such terrible straits, continued to conceal carefully their lack of supplies, giving the impression that they had provisions in abundance, but wished to return home with honor. [4] So a proposal was discussed between the two sides according to which the Persians were to deliver the city over to the Romans in exchange for a thousand pounds of gold. Both parties gladly executed the terms of the agreement and the son of Glones, upon receiving the money, delivered Amida to the Romans. For Glones himself had already died in the following manner.

[5] When the Romans had not yet encamped there but were not far from the city of Amida, a certain peasant, who was accustomed to enter the city secretly with fowls, loaves, and many other delicacies, which he sold to this Glones at a great price, came before the general Patrikios and promised to deliver into his hands Glones and two hundred Persians, if he were to receive from him the promise of some reward. [6] The general promised that he would have everything he desired, and dismissed him.[47] He then tore his garments in a striking manner and entered the city pretending to have been weeping. [7] Coming before Glones and tearing his hair, he spoke as follows:

peasant to Glones

> O Master, I happened to be bringing in for you all the good things from my village, when I ran into some Roman soldiers, for they are constantly wandering about the country here in small bands oppressing the miserable peasantry. They inflicted upon me blows not to be endured and, taking everything that I had, departed, those *robbers*, whose custom of old is to fear the Persians and oppress the farmers! [8] But you, O Master, take thought to defend yourself and us and the Persians. If you go hunting in the outskirts of the city, you will find no mean game. These accursed men go about by fours or fives and do their robbery.

[9] That is what he said. Glones was persuaded and asked the man how many Persians he thought would be sufficient for him to carry out the enterprise. [10] He said that about fifty would do, for they would never meet more than five of them going together; however, to avoid encountering any unexpected circumstance, it would do no harm to take with him one hundred; and if he doubled that number, it would be altogether better, for no harm would come to a man abundantly prepared. [11] Glones then picked out two hundred horsemen and instructed the man to lead the way for them. [12] But he insisted that it was better for him to be sent first to spy out the ground and, if he reported that he had seen Romans going about in the same districts, then the Persians should make their sally at the fitting moment. As this seemed to Glones to be well said, he was sent forward with Glones' permission. [13] He then came before the general Patrikios and explained everything. The general sent with him two of his spearmen and a thousand soldiers. [14] These he concealed about a village called Thilasamon, forty stades from Amida, among dales and woody places, and instructed them to remain there in this ambush. He himself then proceeded to the city on the run. [15] He told Glones that the prey was ready and led him and the two hundred horsemen to the

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47. The source of pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 7.5b, claims to have known this man personally, and names him Gadana.

enemy ambush. When they passed the spot where the Romans were lying in wait, without being observed by Glones or any of the Persians he roused the Romans from their ambuscade and pointed the enemy out to them. [16] When the Persians saw them coming against them, they were shocked because they did not expect such a thing, and were at a complete loss what to do. For they were unable to withdraw to the rear, as the enemy were behind them, nor were they able to flee anywhere else in a hostile land. [17] As well as they could under the circumstances they arrayed themselves for battle and tried to drive back the enemy, but being at a great disadvantage in numbers they were defeated and all of them together with Glones were destroyed. [18] Now when the son of Glones learned this, being deeply grieved and also furious with anger because he had not been able to defend his father, he set fire to the sanctuary of Symeon, a holy man, where Glones had his lodging.[48] [19] Still, neither Glones nor Kavad nor indeed any other Persian saw fit to tear down or destroy in other ways any building in Amida or outside the city. I now return to the previous narrative.

[20] Thus the Romans by giving the money recovered Amida two years after it had been captured by the enemy. When they got into the city, their own negligence and the hardships under which the Persians had maintained themselves were discovered. [21] For upon calculating the amount of grain left there and the number of barbarians who had gone out, they found that rations for about seven days were left in the city, although Glones and his son had been for a long time doling out provisions to the Persians more sparingly than was necessary. [22] To the Romans who had remained with them in the city, as I stated above, they had decided to give nothing at all since the enemy began the siege, so these men at first resorted to unaccustomed foods and took hold of every forbidden thing, and by the end they were eating each other too.[49] [23] So the generals realized that they had been deceived by the barbarians and reproached the soldiers for their lack of self-control, because they had shown themselves lacking in obedience to them, when it was possible to capture as prisoners of war such a multitude of Persians, the son of Glones, and the city itself. Instead, they had incurred the great disgrace of giving Roman money to the enemy and recovering Amida from the Persians through a payment. [24] After this, the Persians, as their war with the Huns was dragging on, entered into a treaty with the Romans that was to last for seven years. It was arranged for the Romans by Keler and for the Persians by Aspebedes. Both armies then went home and remained at peace. [25] Thus, then, as has been told, began the war of the Romans and the Persians, and to this end did it come. I turn now to recount the events concerning the Caspian Gates.

Jan. 505

10. The Tauros mountain range of Kilikia passes first the Kappadokians, Armenians, and the land of the so-called Persarmenians, then also the Albanians, Iberians, and all the

48. Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 56, recounts a similar stratagem: the Romans allowed a flock of sheep to pass before Amida and when the Persians came out to seize it the Romans sprung the ambush and defeated them; they captured their leader, who promised to deliver the city, but they killed him when he failed.

49. A graphic account of the famine is given by pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 7.5c.

other people in this region, both independent and subject to Persia. [2] It extends over a great distance and, as one proceeds along it, it is always spread out wide and reaches great heights. [3] As one passes beyond the boundary of Iberia there is a sort of path in a very narrow passage, extending for a distance of fifty stades. [4] This path terminates in a place cut off by cliffs that is altogether impassible. From there no way out appears, except indeed a small gate set there by nature, just as if it had been made by men, which of old has been called the Caspian Gates.[50] [5] From there on there are plains suitable for riding and extremely well watered, and extensive level tracts used as pasture for horses. [6] Almost all the nations of the Huns are settled here, extending as far as the Sea of Azov. [7] Now if these Huns pass through the gate I just mentioned into the lands of the Persians and the Romans, they come with their horses fresh and without making any detour or encountering precipitous places, except in those fifty stades over which, as was said, they pass to the Iberian boundaries. [8] If, however, they go by any other passes, they reach their destination with great difficulty and can no longer use the same horses. For the detours which they are forced to make are many and steep. [9] When this was observed by Alexander, the son of Philip, he constructed gates in the aforementioned place and established a fort there. This was held by others in the passage of time and finally by Ambazoukes, a Hun by birth but a friend of the Romans and the emperor Anastasios. [10] When this Ambazoukes reached old age and was near to death, he sent to Anastasios asking for money on condition that he hand the fort and the Caspian Gates over to the Romans. [11] But the emperor Anastasios was incapable of doing anything without careful investigation, for that was not his custom; reasoning, therefore, that it was impossible for him to support soldiers in a place that was devoid of all good things and that he had nowhere in the vicinity a nation subject to the Romans, he expressed deep gratitude to the man for his goodwill toward him, but declined this proposition. [12] Ambazoukes died of disease not long afterward, and Kavad overpowered his sons and took possession of the Gates.

[13] The emperor Anastasios, after concluding the treaty with Kavad, built a city in a place called Daras, extremely fortified and worthy of note, named after the emperor *505* himself.[51] [14] This place is distant from the city of Nisibis one hundred stades minus two, and from the border between the Romans from the Persians about twenty-eight. [15] The Persians were eager to prevent the building but were unable to do so, being constrained by their war with the Huns. [16] As soon as Kavad brought this to an end, he sent to the Romans and accused them of having built a city near his own border, although this was forbidden in the agreement previously made between the Medes and the Romans.[52] [17] At that time, therefore, the emperor Anastasios desired, partly

50. It is debated whether discussions in late antiquity refer to the Dariel Pass (more likely) or the Pass of Derbent. For previous Persian requests that the Romans contribute to their defense, see Priskos, *History fr.* 41.1 and 47; Ioannes Lydos, *On the Magistracies* 3.52–53.

51. I.e., Anastasioupolis. We have many detailed accounts of its foundation, including pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 90; Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 517/518; Prokopios, *Buildings* 2.1–3; pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 7.6.

52. 1.2.15.

by threats and partly by emphasizing his friendship with him and bribing him with no small sum of money, to deceive him and remove the accusation. [18] Another city also was built by this emperor, similar to the first, in Armenia, near the boundaries of Persarmenia. In this place there had of old been a village, but it had been raised to the rank and even the name of a city by the favor of the emperor Theodosios, whose name it took on.[53] [19] But Anastasios surrounded it with a most secure circuit-wall, and thus gave offense to the Persians no less than by the other city; for both of them are strongholds menacing their country.

9 July 518 **11.** When a little later Anastasios died, Justin received the empire, forcing aside all the relatives of Anastasios, although they were many and very distinguished. [2] Then a concern came over Kavad that the Persians might attempt to overthrow his house as soon as he died; for it was certain that he would not pass the kingdom on to any of his sons without opposition. [3] While the law called to the throne the eldest of his children, Kavus, on account of his age, this son was not pleasing to Kavad.[54] The father's will did violence to both nature and custom. [4] Zamasp, who was second in age, had lost one of his eyes and so was excluded by the law, for it is not lawful for a one-eyed man or one having any other deformity to become king over the Persians. [5] But Chosroes, who was born to him by the sister of Aspebedes, his father adored, but seeing that practically all the Persians admired the manliness of Zamasp (for he was a capable warrior) and respected his other virtues, he feared that they would rebel against Chosroes and do irreparable harm to his family and the kingdom. [6] Therefore, it seemed best to him to arrange with the Romans to put an end both to the war and the *524/525* causes of war, on condition that Chosroes be adopted by the emperor Justin; for only in this way could he preserve stability in the rule of the kingdom. Accordingly, he sent envoys to discuss these matters and a letter to the emperor Justin in Byzantion. [7] The letter said the following:

> *Kavad to Justin* You yourself know well that we have been treated unjustly indeed by the Romans, but I have decided to waive entirely all the charges against you as I know this, that those people truly prevail who, with justice on their side, are still willingly overcome and defeated by their friends. [8] However I ask of you a certain favor in return for this, which would bind together not only ourselves but also all our subjects in kinship and the goodwill that naturally springs from it, and which would be sufficient to bring to us all the blessings of peace. [9] I say, then, that you make my son Chosroes, who will be my successor on the throne, your adopted son.

[10] When this message was brought to the emperor Justin, he himself was overjoyed and Justinian also, the nephew of the emperor, who was expected to receive from him the empire. [11] And they were hastening to put the act of adoption down in writing, as the law of the Romans prescribes, had they not been prevented by Proklos, who

53. I.e., Theodosioupolis; see *Buildings* 3.5.4–9. Many other places were fortified at this time.

54. In fact there was no law or even strict pattern of succession by primogeniture in Sasanian Iran.

was at that time a counselor to the emperor, holding the office of *quaestor*, as it is called, a just man whom it was manifestly impossible to bribe.[55] [12] For this reason he neither lightly proposed any law nor was he willing to disturb in any way the settled order of things. At that time he opposed what was being done, speaking as follows:

Proklos to Justin and Justinian

> [13] It is not my habit to venture upon innovations; in fact I dread them more than anything else, for I know well that where there is radical change there can be no security. [14] It seems to me that, even if one is especially bold in this matter, he would feel reluctant to perform this act and would tremble at the storm that will arise from it. [15] For I think that nothing else is before our consideration at the present time than the question of how we may hand over the Roman empire to the Persians on a seemly pretext. They engage in no dissimulation nor put up a screen but, explicitly acknowledging their purpose, bluntly propose to strip us of our empire, seeking to veil the obviousness of their deceit by a show of naïveté and hide a shameless intent behind pretended unconcern. [16] Yet both of you ought to resist this attempt of the barbarians with all your power: You, O emperor, so that you are not the last emperor of the Romans, and you, O general, so that you not become your own worst enemy when it comes to ascending to the throne. [17] For other verbal sophistries that are commonly concealed by a show of respect might perhaps need an interpreter for the masses, but this embassy openly and from the start means to make this Chosroes, whoever he is, the adopted heir of the emperor of the Romans. [18] I would have you reason thus in this matter: by nature the possessions of fathers go to their sons and, while the laws among all men are always in conflict with each other by reason of their varying nature, in this matter among both the Romans and all barbarians they are in agreement and harmony with each other: they declare sons to be masters of their fathers' inheritance. So if you take this first step, then you must agree to all its consequences.

[19] Thus spoke Proklos. The emperor and the emperor's nephew took his point and deliberated about what should be done. [20] In the meantime Kavad sent another letter to the emperor Justin asking him to send notable men in order to establish peace with him, and to indicate in writing how he wanted the adoption of his son to be done by Justin. [21] Then Proklos decried the attempt of the Persians even more than before, insisting that their aim was to acquire the Roman empire in as safe a way as possible. [22] His opinion was that the peace should be concluded with them immediately and that leading men should be sent by the emperor for this purpose; and that they must answer explicitly to Kavad, when he asked how the adoption of Chosroes should be accomplished, that it must be done in a way befitting a barbarian; and he explained that barbarians adopt sons not by documents but by an attire of arms. [23] Accordingly, the emperor Justin dismissed the envoys, promising that men who were the noblest of the

55. He was also called Proculus. He is praised in the *Secret History* 6.13, 9.41; by Ioannes Lydos, *On the Magistracies* 3.20; and by a statue that held the epigram that is *Greek Anthology* 16.48.

Romans would follow them not long afterward, and that they would arrange a treaty regarding the peace and Chosroes in the best possible way. [24] He also answered Kavad by letter to the same effect. Accordingly, there were sent from the Romans Hypatios, the nephew of Anastasios, the previous emperor, a patrician who also held the position of general of the East, and Rouphinos, the son of Silvanos, a man of note among the patricians and known to Kavad through their fathers. [25] From the Persians came one of great power and high authority, Siyavush by name, whose title was *adrastadaran salanes*, and Mahbod, who held the office of *magister*.[56] [26] These men came together at a certain place that is on the boundary between the land of the Romans and the Persians. There they met and negotiated over how to resolve their differences and settle the question of the peace well. [27] Chosroes also came to the Tigris river, which is about two days' journey from the city of Nisibis, in order that, when the details of the peace seemed to both parties to be as well arranged as possible, he might go on in person to Byzantion. [28] Many words were said on both sides about their differences, and in particular Siyavush mentioned the land of Kolchis, which is now called Lazike, saying that it had always been subject to the Persians and the Romans had taken it from them by force and held it on no just grounds. [29] When the Romans heard this, they were indignant to think that even Lazike was disputed by the Persians. And when they stated that the adoption of Chosroes must take place in a way proper for a barbarian, this seemed unbearable to the Persians. [30] The two sides therefore separated and departed homeward, and Chosroes went off to his father with nothing accomplished, deeply injured at what had taken place and vowing vengeance upon the Romans for their insult to him.

[31] After this Mahbod began to slander Siyavush to Kavad, saying that he had proposed the discussion of Lazike purposely, although he had not been instructed to do so by his master, and thereby scotched the peace; also that he had spoken earlier with Hypatios, who was by no means well-disposed toward his own emperor and was trying to prevent the conclusion of peace and the adoption of Chosroes. Many other accusations were made against Siyavush by his enemies, and he was summoned to trial. [32] Now the whole Persian council gathered to sit in judgment, moved more by envy than adherence to the law. They were thoroughly hostile to his office, which was not traditional among them, and were also embittered by the temper of the man. [33] For while Siyavush was impossible to bribe and a most exact respecter of justice, he was afflicted with a degree of arrogance not to be found in other men. This quality, indeed, seems to be innate in Persian lords, but in Siyavush even they thought that the disorder had grown to an extraordinary degree. [34] So his accusers said all those things that I explained above, and added to this that the man was by no means willing to live in the established fashion or to uphold the customs of the Persians.[57] [35] For he revered strange new divinities and recently, when his wife died, he had buried her, although it was forbidden by the laws of the Persians ever to hide in the earth the bodies of the

56. For the title of Siyavush, see 1.6.18; *magister* (general) is here probably the Persian *spahbadh*.
57. For the expression, see Thucydides, *History* 1.130.

dead.[58] [36] The judges therefore condemned the man to death, while Kavad, seeming to be deeply moved with sympathy for his friend Siyavush, was unwilling to rescue him. [37] He did not, on the other hand, make it known that he was angry with him but, as he said, he was unwilling to relax the laws of the Persians, although he owed the man the price of his life, given that Siyavush was chiefly responsible both for the fact that he was alive and also that he was king. Thus, then, Siyavush was condemned and was removed from among men. [38] The office that began with him also ended with him, for no other man has been made *adrastadaran salanes*. Meanwhile Rouphinos also slandered Hypatios to the emperor. [39] As a result the emperor deposed him from his office and tortured some of his associates most cruelly only to find that this slander was absolutely groundless; so he did Hypatios no further harm.

12. Immediately after this, Kavad, although eager to make some kind of an invasion into the land of the Romans, was utterly unable to do so on account of the following obstacle. [2] The Iberians, the ones who live in Asia, are settled near the Caspian Gates, which lie to the north of them. Adjoining them on the left toward the west is Lazike, and on the right toward the east are the Persian peoples. [3] This nation is Christian and they guard the rites of this faith more closely than any other men known to us, but they happen to have been subjects of the king of the Persians since ancient times.[59] [4] Just then Kavad desired to force them to adopt the rites of his own religion. He ordered their king, Gourgenes, to do all things as the Persians are accustomed to do them and, in particular, never to
bury their dead in the earth but to throw them to the birds and dogs. [5] For this reason, *526*
Gourgenes wished to go over to the emperor Justin, and he asked to receive pledges that the Romans would never abandon the Iberians to the Persians. [6] The emperor gave him these pledges with great eagerness and he sent Probos, the nephew of the late emperor Anastasios, a patrician, with a great sum of money to Bosporos, in order to win over with money an army of Huns and send them as allies to the Iberians. [7] This Bosporos is a city by the sea, on the left as one sails into the Black Sea, twenty days' journey distant from the city of Cherson, which is the limit of Roman territory. Between these cities everything is held by the Huns. [8] In ancient times the people of Bosporos were autonomous but recently they had decided to go over to the emperor Justin.[60] [9] Probos, however,
departed from there without accomplishing anything,[61] and the emperor sent Petros as *526/*
general with some Huns to Lazike to fight for Gourgenes as vigorously as they could. *527*
[10] Meanwhile, Kavad sent a considerable army against Gourgenes and the Iberians, and as general a Persian with the rank of *varizes*, Boes by name.[62] [11] Then it emerged

58. That is, according to Zoroastrian ritual prescriptions for the disposal of dead bodies. Prokopios' account of this trial includes allusions to that of Sokrates.

59. Iberia had fallen to the Persian zone of influence in the late fourth century.

60. Cf. 8.5.26.

61. For Probos' mission, see also pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 12.7n.

62. Wahriz is actually a name. Otherwise, it is not clear what rank Prokopios means.

that Gourgenes was too weak to withstand the attack of the Persians, for the help from the Romans was insufficient, and so with all the notables of the Iberians he fled to Lazike, taking with him his wife, children, and brothers, of whom Peranios was the eldest. [12] When they reached the boundaries of Lazike, they remained there and, sheltering themselves by the roughness of the country, they took their stand against the enemy. [13] The Persians followed them but accomplished nothing worthy of mention as the rough country was working against them.

[14] Then the Iberians arrived at Byzantion and Petros came to the emperor at his summons. From then on the emperor demanded that he assist the Lazoi to guard their
528 country, even against their will, and he sent an army under the command of Eirenaios. [15] Now there are two fortresses among the Lazoi that one meets upon entering their country from the boundaries of Iberia,[63] and their defense had been in charge of the natives since ancient times, although they experienced great hardship in this matter, for neither grain nor wine nor any other good thing is produced there. [16] Nor indeed can anything be brought in from elsewhere on account of the narrowness of the paths, unless men carry it. [17] However, the Lazoi were able to live on a certain kind of millet that grows there, as they were used to it. [18] The emperor removed these garrisons from there and commanded that Roman soldiers be stationed to guard the fortresses. [19] At first the Lazoi with difficulty brought in provisions for these soldiers, but later they gave up the service and the Romans abandoned the forts, whereupon the Persians with no trouble took possession of them. This is what happened in Lazike.

526 [20] The Romans, under the leadership of Sittas and Belisarios, invaded Persarmenia, a territory subject to the Persians, where they plundered a large tract of country and then withdrew with a great multitude of Armenian captives. [21] These two men were both youths and wearing their first beards, spearmen of the general Justinian, who later shared the empire with his uncle Justin. But when a second inroad was made by the Romans into Armenia, Narses and Aratios unexpectedly confronted them and engaged them in battle. [22] These men not long after came to the Romans as deserters and made the expedition to Italy with Belisarios;[64] but on the present occasion they joined
527 battle with the forces of Sittas and Belisarios and gained the upper hand. [23] An invasion was also made near the city of Nisibis by another Roman army under the command of Libelarios of Thrace. This army fled abruptly and withdrew although no one came out against them. [24] Hence the emperor deposed Libelarios from his office and appointed Belisarios commander of the soldiers stationed at Daras. It was at that time that Prokopios, who wrote this history, was chosen as his adviser.

1 Apr. 527 **13.** Not long after this Justin, who had declared his nephew Justinian emperor with
1 Aug. 527 him, died, and thus the empire came to Justinian alone. [2] This Justinian commanded

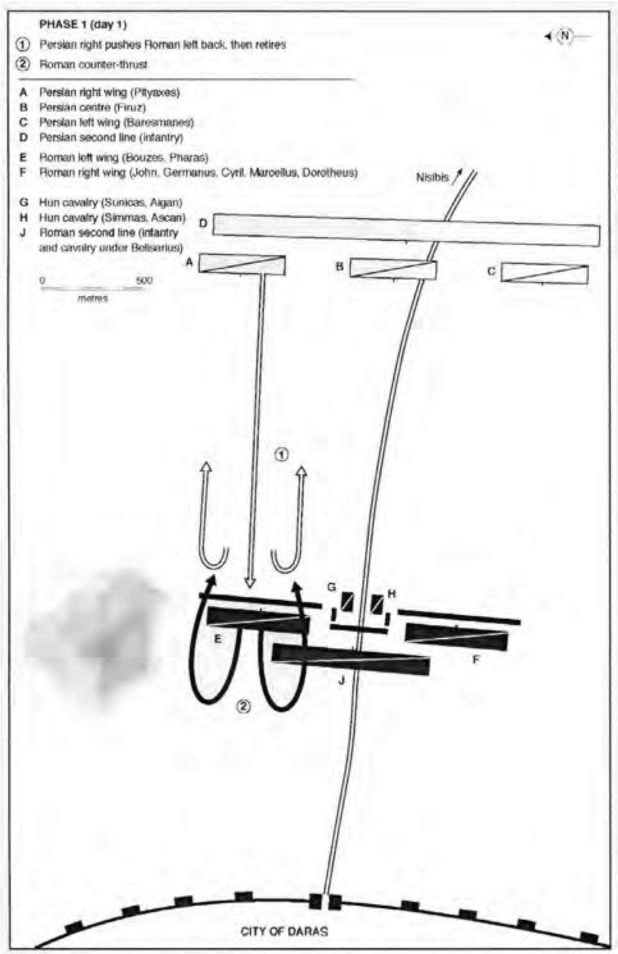
63. Cf. 8.13.15: Sarapanis and Skanda.

64. For the identity of the defectors, see 1.5.31–33; regarding Italy, 6.13.31 (actually with Narses in 538).

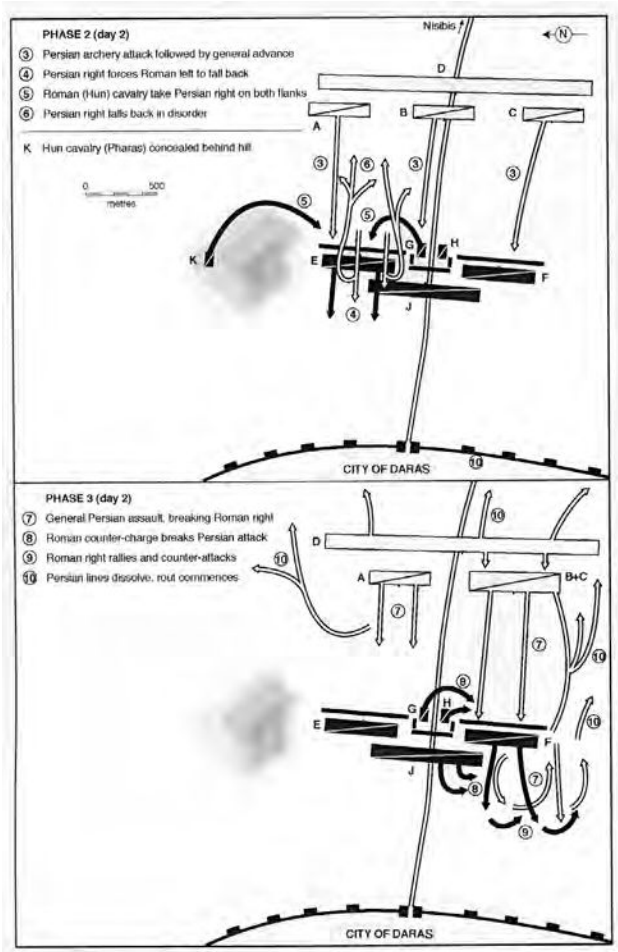
Belisarios to build a fortress in a place called Mindouos, which is by the very boundary
of Persia, on the left as one goes to Nisibis. [3] He accordingly began to carry out the *528*
emperor's instructions with great eagerness, and the fort was already rising to a considerable height because he was using many artisans. [4] But the Persians forbade them to build any further, threatening that they would soon obstruct the work not with words alone but also with deeds. [5] When the emperor heard this, inasmuch as Belisarios was not able to beat off the Persians from the place with the army he had, he ordered another army to go there and also Koutzes and Bouzes, who at that time commanded the soldiers in Libanos. These two were brothers from Thrace, both young and reckless in engaging with the enemy. [6] So both armies were gathered together at the scene of the building operations, the Persians in order to block the work with all their power, and the Romans to defend the laborers. [7] A fierce battle took place in which the Romans were defeated, in fact many of them were killed, while others were captured by the enemy, [8] among them Koutzes. All these captives the Persians led away to their own country and, putting them in chains, confined them permanently in a cave. As for the fort, given that no one was defending it any longer, they razed what had been built to the ground.[65]

[9] After this the emperor Justinian appointed Belisarios general of the East and *Apr.*
instructed him to march against the Persians. He collected a formidable army and came *529*
to Daras. [10] Hermogenes also came to him from the emperor to set the army in *530*
order with him, holding the office of *magister*. This man was formerly the counselor of Vitalianos, when he was at war with the emperor Anastasios. [11] The emperor also sent Rouphinos as envoy, commanding him to remain in Hierapolis on the Euphrates river until he himself should give the word. For already there was much discussion on both sides about a peace. [12] But suddenly someone reported to Belisarios and Hermogenes that the Persians were expected to invade the land of the Romans, and were eager to capture the city of Daras. [13] When they heard this, they prepared for
the battle as follows. Not far from the gate which lies opposite the city of Nisibis, about *July*
a stone's throw away, they dug a deep trench with many passages across it. This trench *530*
was not dug in a straight line, but in the following manner. [14] In the middle there was a rather short straight part, and at either end of this they made two trenches at right angles to the first; and, starting from the extremities of these two cross trenches, they continued two straight trenches in the original direction to a great distance. [15] Not long after the Persians came with a great army, and all of them made camp in a place called Ammodios, at a distance of twenty stades from the city of Daras. [16] Among

65. The location of Mindouos is unknown. Prokopios implies that it was north of Nisibis. Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.26 (528 AD), reports an invasion of Mesopotamia by a Persian army of thirty thousand men opposed by, among others, Belisarios and Koutzes; the Romans were defeated and Koutzes was captured. Pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.2b, recounts the same events but places them near Thannuris, south of Nisibis, and wrongly claims that Koutzes was killed. Prokopios, we should remember, was present. Be that as it may, Justinian subsequently sent Hermogenes to negotiate in 529 (Malalas, *Chronicle* 19.34); Kavad's response (late 529) is given at ibid., 18.44.



Plan of the battle of Daras 530, day 1.



Plan of the battle of Daras 530, day 2.

the leaders of this army were Pityaxes[66] and the one-eyed Vareshman. One general held supreme command, a Persian whose title was Mihran (for thus the Persians designate this office),[67] Peroz by name. [17] He immediately sent to Belisarios, instructing him to prepare the bath: for he wished to bathe there on the following day. [18] Accordingly, the Romans made the most vigorous preparations for the battle, with the expectation that they would fight on the next day.

[19] At sunrise, seeing the enemy advancing against them, they arrayed themselves as follows. The far end of the left straight trench which joined the cross trench, and as far as the hill which rises here, was held by Bouzes with a large force of horsemen and by Fara the Herul with three hundred of his people. [20] On the right of these, outside the trench, at the angle formed by the cross trench and the straight section which extended from that point, were Sounikas and Aigan, Massagetai by birth, with six hundred horsemen, in order that, if those under Bouzes and Fara should be driven back, they might, by moving quickly on the flank and getting in the rear of the enemy, be able easily to support the Romans at that point. On the other wing also they were arrayed in the same manner, [21] for the far end of the straight trench was held by a large force of horsemen, who were commanded by Ioannes, the son of Niketas, and by Kyrillos and Markellos; with them were Germanos and Dorotheos; while at the angle on the right were stationed six hundred horsemen, commanded by Simmas and Askan, also Massagetai, in order that, as has been said, they might move out from there and attack the rear of the Persians in case the forces of Ioannes were by any chance driven back. [22] Thus all along the trench stood the cavalry units and the infantry army. And behind these in the middle stood the forces of Belisarios and Hermogenes. [23] Thus were the Romans arrayed, amounting to twenty-five thousand. But the Persian army consisted of forty thousand horse and foot, and they all stood close together facing the front, so as to make the front of the phalanx as deep as possible. [24] For a long time neither side began battle with the other, but the Persians seemed to be wondering at the good order of the Romans and appeared to be at a loss how to handle the situation.

[25] In the late afternoon a detachment of the cavalry who held the right wing separated themselves from the rest of the army and came against the forces of Bouzes and Fara. [26] The latter withdrew a short distance to the rear. The Persians, however, did not pursue them but remained there, fearing, I suppose, that they would be surrounded by the enemy. Then the Romans who had turned to flight suddenly rushed at them. [27] The Persians did not withstand their onset and rode back to the phalanx, and again the forces of Bouzes and Fara took up their position. [28] In this skirmish seven of the Persians fell, and the Romans gained possession of their bodies. Thereafter both armies remained quietly in position. [29] But one Persian, a young man, riding his horse up close to the Roman army, began to challenge all of them, calling for whoever

66. "Pitiax" was an Iberian or Armenian military rank, equivalent to general.

67. Mihran was actually one of the leading noble houses of the Sasanian empire, but it tended to hold military commands in hereditary succession, so Prokopios is not entirely wrong.

wished to do battle with him. [30] None of them dared face the danger, except a certain Andreas, one of the attendants of Bouzes, not a soldier nor one who had ever practiced the business of war, but a trainer of youths in charge of a certain wrestling school in Byzantion. [31] Through this it came about that he was following the army, for he was the trainer of Bouzes' body in the bath; his birthplace was Byzantion. This man alone had the courage, without being ordered by Bouzes or anyone else, to go out of his own accord to meet the man in single combat. He reached the barbarian while the latter was still considering how to make his attack, and struck him with his spear on the right breast. [32] The Persian did not bear the blow delivered by a man of such great strength, and fell from his horse to the earth. Then Andreas with a small knife slew him like a sacrificial animal as he lay on his back, and a mighty shout was raised both from the city wall and the Roman army. [33] The Persians were deeply grieved at the outcome and sent another horseman for the same purpose, a manly fellow and well favored as to bodily size, but not a youth, as some of the hair on his head already showed grey. [34] He rode up to the enemy army, vehemently brandishing the whip that he would use on his horse, and called to battle whoever among the Romans was willing. [35] When no one went out against him, Andreas, without attracting the notice of anyone, once more came out into the middle, although he had been forbidden to do so by Hermogenes. [36] Both rushed madly upon each other with their spears, and the weapons, driven against their breastplates, were turned aside with mighty force; the horses, striking their heads together, fell and threw off their riders. [37] The two men fell close to each other and made great haste to rise to their feet, but the Persian was not able to do this easily because his size was working against him, while Andreas, anticipating him (his practice in the wrestling school gave him this advantage), struck him as he was rising on his knee and, as he fell back to the ground, dispatched him. [38] A roar went up from the wall and the Roman army, as great, if not greater, than before. The Persians broke their phalanx and withdrew to Ammodios, while the Romans, raising the paean, went inside the walls; [39] for already it was growing dark. Thus both armies passed that night.

14. On the following day ten thousand soldiers arrived who had been summoned by the Persians from the city of Nisibis, and Belisarios and Hermogenes wrote to Mihran as follows:

Belisarios and Hermogenes to Mihran

> The highest blessing is peace, as is agreed by all men who have even a small share of reason.[68] [2] It follows that if anyone destroys it, he would be most responsible for the evils that come not only to his neighbors but also to his own nation. The best general, therefore, is one who is able to bring about peace from war. [3] But you, when affairs were well settled between the Romans and the Persians, have decided to bring war upon us without cause, although both kings are in favor of peace and our envoys are already present in the vicinity, who will soon settle all the points of dispute by talking over the

68. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 4.62.2; also Plato, *Laws* 628c; Polybios, *History* 4.74.3.

situation together, unless some irreparable harm coming from your invasion manages to frustrate this hope for us. [4] Lead your army away as soon as possible to the land of the Persians and do not stand in the way of the greatest blessings, so that you are not at a later time held responsible by the Persians, as is probable, for the ensuing disasters.

[5] When Mihran saw this letter brought to him, he replied as follows:

Mihran to Belisarios and Hermogenes

I would have been persuaded by what you write and done what you demand, were the letter not, as it happens, from Romans, for whom the making of promises is easy but the fulfillment of promises in deed most difficult and beyond hope, especially if you ratify the agreement by oaths. [6] We, then, despairing at your deception, have been compelled to come before you in arms; as for you, my dear Romans, consider that from now on you will be obliged to do nothing else than make war against the Persians. For here we will be compelled either to die or grow old until you give us justice in deed.

Such was the reply that Mihran wrote back. [7] Again, then, Belisarios and his staff wrote as follows:

Belisarios to Mihran

O excellent Mihran, it is not necessary in all things to rely on boasts, nor to lay upon one's neighbors accusations that are entirely unjustified. [8] For we said with truth that Rouphinos had come as an envoy and was not far away, and you yourself will know this soon. [9] But since you long for deeds of war, we will array ourselves against you with the help of God, who, we know, will support us in this battle, being moved by the peaceful inclination of the Romans, but punishing the arrogance of the Persians and your decision to resist us when we invite you to peace. [10] We will array ourselves against you by fastening what has been written by both sides on the top of our banners, and go into battle.

[11] Such was the message of this letter. Mihran answered as follows:

Mihran to Belisarios

We too are entering upon the war with our gods, with whose help we will come before you, and I trust that tomorrow they will bring the Persians into Daras. [12] Let the bath and lunch be ready for me within the walls.

When Belisarios and his men read this, they prepared for battle.

[13] On the succeeding day Mihran called all the Persians together at about sunrise and spoke as follows:

Mihran to the Persian army

I am not ignorant that the Persians are accustomed to be courageous in the presence of danger not because of their leaders' words but because of their individual bravery and shame before each other. [14] But seeing you wondering why it is that, although the Romans have so far tended to go into battle with confusion and disorder, they just now resisted advancing Persians with a kind of order which is by no means typical of them, for this reason I have decided to speak some words of exhortation to you, so that it does not come about that you evaluate the situation incorrectly by holding an opinion that is not true. [15] Do not think that

> the Romans have suddenly become better at war or that they have acquired more valor or experience, but rather they have become more cowardly than they were previously. At any rate they fear the Persians so much that they have not dared to form their phalanx without a trench. [16] Not even with this did they begin any fighting, but when we did not join battle with them at all, joyfully they withdrew to the wall, considering that matters had gone better for them than they had hoped. [17] This is also why they were not thrown into confusion, for they had not yet come into the dangers of battle. But if the fighting comes to close quarters, fear will come upon them and their inexperience will likely throw them into their customary disorder. So much regarding the enemy. [18] As for you, O men of Persia, call to mind the judgment of the king of kings. [19] For if you do not perform brave deeds in the present engagement in a manner worthy of the valor of the Persians, an inglorious punishment will fall upon you.

[20] With this exhortation Mihran led his army against the enemy. Likewise Belisarios and Hermogenes brought all the Romans before the walls and encouraged them with these words:

Belisarios and Hermogenes to the Roman army

> [21] You know well that the Persians are not altogether invincible nor too strong to be killed, having sized them up in the previous battle; and no one can deny that, while superior to them in bravery and in strength of body, you were defeated only by not obeying your officers. [22] You now have the opportunity to set this right with no trouble. For while the adversities of fortune cannot be set right by any effort on our part, reason may easily cure a man of the troubles that he caused to himself. [23] So if you are willing to heed the orders given, you will immediately prevail in battle. For they come against us in confidence because of nothing other than our disorder. [24] But this time also they will be disappointed in this hope, and will depart just as in the previous encounter. As for the great numbers of the enemy, by which more than anything else they inspire fear, it is right for you to despise them. [25] Their whole infantry is nothing more than a crowd of pitiful peasants who come into battle for no other purpose than to dig through walls, despoil the slain, and, in general, serve the soldiers. [26] They have no weapons at all with which to harm their opponents, and they only hold before themselves those enormous shields in order that they may not possibly be hit by the enemy. [27] Therefore, if you show yourselves brave men in this struggle, you will not only conquer the Persians for the present, but you will also punish their stupidity, so that they will never again march into Roman territory.

[28] When Belisarios and Hermogenes had finished this exhortation, as they saw the Persians advancing against them, they quickly drew up the soldiers in the same formation as before. [29] The barbarians, coming up before them, took their stand facing them. Mihran, however, did not array all the Persians against the enemy, but only half of them, allowing the others to remain behind. [30] These were to relieve the men who were fighting and fall upon their opponents with vigor intact, so that all might fight in constant rotation. [31] The unit of the so-called Immortals alone he ordered to remain

at rest until he himself should give the signal.[69] [32] He took his own station at the middle of the front, putting Pityaxes in command of the right wing and Vareshman of the left. In this way, then, both armies were drawn up. Then Fara came before Belisarios and Hermogenes, and said: [33] "It does not seem to me that I will do the enemy any great harm if I remain here with the Heruls; but if we conceal ourselves on this slope and then, when the Persians are busy fighting, climb up by this hill and suddenly come upon their rear, shooting them from behind, we will in all likelihood do them the greatest harm." Thus he spoke and, as it pleased Belisarios and his staff, he carried out this plan.

[34] Up to midday neither side began battle. But as soon as the noon hour had passed, the barbarians set to it, having postponed the engagement to this time of day for the reason that they are used to eating only toward late afternoon, while the Romans do so before noon; thus they thought that the Romans would never hold out so well, if they attacked them while they were hungry. [35] At first, then, both sides discharged arrows against each other and the missiles by their great number made a kind of vast cloud.[70] Many men were falling on both sides, but the missiles of the barbarians flew much more thickly. [36] For fresh men were always fighting in rotation, affording the enemy no opportunity to observe what was being done. Even so the Romans did not have the worst of it. For a steady wind blew from their side against the barbarians and checked the force of their arrows to a considerable degree. [37] After both sides had exhausted their missiles, they began to use spears against each other, and the battle had come still more to close quarters. On the Roman side the left wing was suffering especially. [38] For the Kadisenoi,[71] who were fighting under Pityaxes at this point, rushed up suddenly in great numbers, routed their enemy, and, pressing hard upon the men in flight, were killing many of them. [39] When this was observed by the men under Sounikas and Aigan, they charged against them at full speed. But first the three hundred Heruls under Fara appeared in the rear of the enemy from the high ground and performed valorous deeds against all of them and especially the Kadisenoi. [40] The latter, seeing also the forces of Sounikas already coming up against them from the flank, rushed into flight. [41] And the rout became complete, for the Romans here joined forces with each other, and there was a great slaughter of the barbarians. [42] On the Persian right wing not fewer than three thousand perished in this action, while the rest barely escaped to the phalanx and were saved. [43] The Romans did not continue their pursuit, but both sides took their stand facing each other in line. Such was the course of these events.

[44] But Mihran stealthily sent many soldiers to the left and with them all the so-called Immortals. When these were noticed by Belisarios and Hermogenes, they ordered the six hundred men under Sounikas and Aigan to go to the angle on the right, where those under Simmas and Askan were stationed, and behind them they placed many

69. The Immortals were an elite unit of heavy cavalry.

70. Cf. the battle of Thermopylai in Herodotos, *Histories* 7.226.

71. The identity of this group is uncertain. They are not to be confused with the Kadousioi by the Caspian Sea.

of Belisarios' men. [45] The Persians who held the left wing under the leadership of Vareshman, together with the Immortals, charged on the run against the Romans opposite them, who failed to withstand the attack and rushed into flight. [46] Then the Romans in the angle and all who were behind them advanced with eagerness against the pursuers. [47] As they came upon the barbarians from the side, they cut their army into two parts, having the greater part of them on their right, while some also who were left behind were placed on their left. Among these happened to be the standard-bearer of Vareshman, whom Sounikas charged and struck with his spear. [48] Already the Persians who were leading the pursuit had perceived the danger they were in and, wheeling about, they stopped the pursuit and went against their assailants; thus they became exposed to the enemy on both sides. [49] For those in flight before them realized what was happening and turned back again. The rest of the Persians and the unit of the Immortals, seeing the standard dipping and lowered to the earth, rushed all together against the Romans at that point with Vareshman. The Romans held their ground. [50] And first Sounikas killed Vareshman and threw him from his horse to the ground. As a result, the barbarians were seized with great fear and thought no longer of resistance, but fled in utter confusion. [51] The Romans, having surrounded them, killed about five thousand. Thus both armies were all set in motion, the Persians in retreat, the Romans in pursuit. [52] In this part of the conflict all the infantry in the Persian army threw down their shields, were caught, and ruthlessly slaughtered by the enemy. But the Romans pursued only for a short while. [53] For Belisarios and Hermogenes absolutely refused to let them go farther, fearing that the Persians might turn about in desperation and rout those who were pursuing them so recklessly. It seemed to them sufficient to preserve the victory unmarred. [54] For on that day the Persians had been defeated in battle by the Romans, which had not happened for a long time.[72] Thus the two armies separated from each other. [55] The Persians were no longer willing to fight a straight-up battle with the Romans. But some sudden attacks were made on both sides, in which the Romans were not at a disadvantage. This, then, was what the armies did in Mesopotamia.

15. Kavad sent another army into the part of Armenia that is subject to the Romans. *530*
This army was composed of Persarmenians and Sounitai, who are neighbors of the Alans. There were also three thousand Huns with them, the so-called Sabeiroi, a most warlike race. [2] Mihr-Mihroe, a Persian, had been made general of the whole force. When they were three days' march from Theodosioupolis, they made camp and, remaining in the land of the Persarmenians, made their preparations for the invasion. [3] Now it happened that the general of Armenia was Dorotheos, a man of discretion and experienced in many wars. Sittas held the office of general in Byzantion, and had authority over the whole army in Armenia. [4] These two, then, upon learning that an army was being assembled in Persarmenia, immediately sent two spearmen to spy out the whole force of

72. A bronze statue of Justinian was set up in the hippodrome to commemorate the victory (*Greek Anthology* 16.62–63).

the enemy and report to them. [5] Both of these men got into the barbarian camp and, after noting everything accurately, departed. [6] And they were traveling toward some place in that region when they happened unexpectedly upon hostile Huns. One of the two, Dagaris by name, was captured and bound by them, while the other succeeded in escaping and reported everything to the generals. [7] They then armed their whole force and made an unexpected assault upon the camp of the enemy. [8] The barbarians were panic-stricken by the unexpected attack and never thought of resistance; they fled as best each one could. Thereupon the Romans, after killing many and plundering the camp, immediately marched back.

[9] Not long after this Mihr-Mihroe collected the whole army and invaded the Roman territory, and they came upon the enemy near the city of Satala. There they encamped and remained at rest in a place called Oktaba, which is fifty-six stades from the city. [10] Sittas led out a thousand men and concealed them behind one of the many hills that surround the city of Satala, which lies in a plain. [11] He ordered Dorotheos to stay inside the walls with the rest of the army, because they did not think that they were able to withstand the enemy on level ground, as their number was not fewer than thirty thousand, while their own forces scarcely amounted to half that. [12] On the following day the barbarians came up close to the walls and busily set about closing in the town. But suddenly, seeing the forces of Sittas coming down upon them from high ground, and having no means of estimating their number, as owing to the summer season a great cloud of dust hung over them, they thought they were much more numerous than they were. So they hurriedly abandoned their plan of investing the town and hastened to mass their force into a small space. [13] But the Romans anticipated the movement and, dividing their own force into two, set upon them as they were departing from the walls; and when this was seen by the whole Roman army, they took courage and with a great rush poured out from the walls and advanced against their opponents. [14] They thus caught the Persians between their own soldiers and put them to flight. However, as the barbarians were greatly superior to their enemy in numbers, as has been said, they still offered resistance and the battle became a fierce one at close quarters. [15] As they were all cavalry, the pursuits went back and forth for both sides. Thereupon Florentios, a Thracian, commanding a detachment of cavalry, charged into the enemy's center and, seizing the general's standard, forced it to the ground and started to ride back. [16] Though he himself was overtaken and fell there, hacked to pieces, he was the chief cause of victory for the Romans. For when the barbarians could no longer see the standard, they were thrown into great disorder and terror. They retreated, got inside their camp, and remained quiet, having lost many men in the battle. [17] On the next day they all returned homeward with no one following, for it seemed to the army of the Romans a great and very noteworthy thing that such a great multitude of barbarians in their own country had suffered those things that I have just narrated; and that, after making an invasion into hostile territory, they should withdraw thus without achieving anything and defeated by a smaller force.

[18] At that time the Romans also acquired certain Persian places in Persarmenia, both the fortress of Bolon and the fortress called Pharangion, where the Persians mine

gold and take it to the king. [19] It happened also that a short time before this they had subjected the nation of the Tzanoi, who had been settled since ancient times within Roman territory as an autonomous people. I will now relate how these things were accomplished.[73] [20] As one goes from the regions of Armenia into Persarmenia, the Tauros lies on the right, extending into Iberia and the peoples there, as I said a little before,[74] while on the left the road which continues to descend for a great distance is overhung by extremely steep mountains that are always concealed by clouds and snow. [21] From here the Phasis river issues and flows into the land of Kolchis.[75] In this place from the beginning lived barbarians, the Tzanoi people, subject to no one, called Sanoi in early times. They made plundering expeditions against the Romans who lived there. Their lifestyle was harsh and they were always living off what they stole; for their land produced for them nothing good to eat. [22] Hence the emperor of the Romans sent them each year a fixed amount of gold, on condition that they not plunder the country in that area. [23] The barbarians had sworn to observe this agreement with oaths that are traditional to them and then, disregarding what they had sworn, got used to making unexpected attacks that injured not only the Armenians but also the Romans who lived near them as far as the sea. Then, after making a brief inroad, they would immediately return to their homes. [24] Whenever they happened upon a Roman army they were always defeated in battle but they were entirely unconquerable because of the strength of their strongholds. Sittas had defeated them in battle before this war, after which by many kind words and deeds he had been able to win them over completely. [25] For they changed their manner of life to a more civilized sort, enrolled themselves among the Roman soldiery, and from that time they have gone forth against the enemy with the rest of the Roman army. They also abandoned their own religion for a more pious faith, and all of them became Christians. Such, then, was the history of the Tzanoi.[76]

[26] Beyond the borders of this people there is a canyon that is both deep and extremely steep, extending as far as the Caucasus mountains. In it are populous towns, and grapes and other fruits grow plentifully. [27] This canyon for the length of a three days' journey is tributary to the Romans, but from there begins the territory of the Persarmenians, where the gold mine is found that, by permission of Kavad, was supervised by one of the locals, Symeon by name. [28] When Symeon saw that both sides were actively engaged in war, he decided to deprive Kavad of the revenue. [29] Therefore he gave over himself and Pharangion to the Romans, but refused to deliver over to either side the gold of the mine. [30] The Romans did nothing, thinking it sufficient for them that the enemy had lost the income from there, while the Persians were

73. For the Tzanoi, see also 8.1.7–9.

74. 1.10.1–2.

75. Prokopios here confuses the Phasis with the Boas, as at 2.29.14.

76. Sittas' victory should be dated to 528 or 529. For the submission of the Tzanoi, see also *Novel* 1, pr., and 28, pr.; and a detailed rhetorical account in *Buildings* 3.6.

unable to force the inhabitants of the place to terms against the will of the Romans, as the difficult terrain worked against them.

[31] At about the same time Narses and Aratios who had an encounter with Sittas and Belisarios in the land of the Persarmenians at the beginning of this war, as I stated above,[77] came with their mother as deserters to the Romans. The emperor's steward, Narses, received them (for he too happened to be a Persarmenian by birth), and presented them with a large sum of money. [32] When Isaakes, their youngest brother, learned this, he secretly opened negotiations with the Romans and delivered over to them the fortress of Bolon, which lies near the limits of Theodosioupolis. [33] For he directed that soldiers should be concealed somewhere in the vicinity, and he received them into the fort by night, opening a small gate stealthily for them. Thus he too came to Byzantion.[78]

16. That is how matters stood for the Romans. But the Persians, although defeated by Belisarios in the battle at Daras, decided not to depart from there until Rouphinos, coming into the presence of Kavad, spoke as follows:

Rouphinos to Kavad

O king, I have been sent by your brother, who reproaches you with a just reproach because the Persians have come in arms into his land for no just cause. [2] It would be more seemly for a king who is not only mighty but also as wise as you are to lead matters out of war and into peace, rather than, when affairs were satisfactorily settled, to inflict unnecessary turmoil upon himself and his neighbors. [3] Thus I myself have come here with good hopes, in order that from now on both peoples may enjoy the blessings that come from peace.

So spoke Rouphinos. [4] Kavad replied as follows:

Kavad to Rouphinos

O son of Silvanos, by no means try to reverse the causes, understanding as you do best of all that you Romans have been the chief cause of the whole conflict. For we guard the Caspian Gates to the advantage of both the Persians and Romans, after forcing out the barbarians there, given that Anastasios, the emperor of the Romans, as you yourself surely know, when the opportunity was offered him to buy them with money, was not willing to do so, so that he would not be required to squander great sums of money on behalf of both nations by keeping an army there perpetually. [5] And since that time we have stationed that great army there and have supplied it up to the present time, thereby enabling you to inhabit the land unplundered as far as concerns the barbarians on that side and to hold your own possessions free of care. [6] But as if this were not sufficient for you, you have also made a great city, Daras, as a bastion against the Persians, although this was explicitly forbidden in the treaty that Anatolios arranged with the Persians. As a result the Persian state is saddled with the difficulties and expense of two armies,

77. 1.12.20–22.

78. The three brothers have been identified as Nerseh, Hrahat, and Sahak of the Kamsarakan house.

> one so that the Massagetai do not plunder the land of both of us with impunity, and the other to check your inroads. [7] When lately we made a protest regarding these matters and demanded that one of two things be done by you, either that we jointly send armies to the Caspian Gates or that the city of Daras should be dismantled, you refused to understand what was said, but saw fit to strengthen your plot against the Persians by a greater injury, if we remember correctly the building of the fort in Mindouos.[79] Even now the Romans may choose peace, or may elect war, by either doing justice to us or violating our rights. [8] For never will the Persians lay down their arms until the Romans either join them in guarding the Gates, as is just and right, or dismantle the city of Daras.

[9] With these words Kavad dismissed the ambassador, hinting that he was willing to take money from the Romans and have done with the causes of the war. [10] This was reported to the emperor by Rouphinos when he came to Byzantion. Not long after *early 531* Hermogenes also arrived, and the winter came to a close. Thus ended the fourth year of the reign of the emperor Justinian.

17. At the beginning of spring a Persian army under the leadership of Azarethes invaded *spring 531* Roman territory. They were fifteen thousand strong, all cavalry. With them was al-Mundhir, son of Sakkike,[80] with a vast body of Saracens. [2] But this invasion was not made by the Persians in the usual manner; for they did not invade Mesopotamia, as before, but the land formerly called Kommagene but now Euphratesia, a point from which, as far as we know, the Persians never before marched against the Romans. [3] I will now explain why the land was called Mesopotamia and why the Persians refrained from attacking at this point.

[4] There is a mountain in Armenia that is not especially steep, forty-two stades distant from Theodosioupolis and lying to the north of it. From this mountain issue two springs, forming immediately two rivers. The one on the right is called the Euphrates and the other the Tigris. [5] One of these, the Tigris, descends with no deviations and no tributaries, except small ones, straight toward the city of Amida. [6] Continuing north from this city it enters the land of Assyria.[81] But the Euphrates at its beginning flows for a short distance and then immediately disappears as it goes on; it does not, however, become subterranean, but a very strange thing happens. [7] The water is covered by a deep bog, about fifty stades in length and twenty in breadth. Reeds grow in this mud in great abundance. [8] But the earth there is so hard that it seems to those who happen upon it to be nothing but solid ground, so that both pedestrians and horsemen travel over it without fear. [9] In fact, even wagons pass over the place in great numbers every day, but they are wholly insufficient to shake the bog or find a weak spot in it. [10] The natives burn the reeds every year to prevent the roads from being blocked up by

79. 1.13.2.

80. This was apparently the name of al-Mundhir's mother.

81. Past Amida the Tigris flows east and then south into Assyria.

them. Once, when a violent wind struck the place, the fire reached the ends of the roots and the water appeared at a small opening. [11] But in a short time the ground closed again and the place regained its previous form. From there the river proceeds into the land called Kelesene,[82] where the sanctuary of Artemis-in-Tauris was, from which they say Iphigeneia, the daughter of Agamemnon, fled with Orestes and Pylades, taking the statue of Artemis.[83] [12] For the other temple that has existed even to my day in the city of Komana is not the one "in-Tauris." I will explain how this temple came into being.

[13] When Orestes had departed from Tauris with his sister, it happened that he became ill. He asked about the disease and they say that the oracle responded that his trouble would not abate until he built a temple to Artemis in a spot such as the one in Tauris, and there cut off his hair and name the city after it.[84] [14] So Orestes, going about those regions, came to Pontos and saw a mountain that rose steep and towering, while along its edges flowed the river Iris.[85] [15] Orestes, therefore, supposing then that the oracle had indicated this place to him, built there a great city and the temple of Artemis, and, cutting off his hair, named a city after it that even up to the present time is called Komana. [16] But after Orestes had done this, the disease continued to be as virulent as before, if not more so. The man perceived that he was not satisfying the oracle by doing these things, and so again went about looking everywhere and found a certain spot in Kappadokia closely resembling the one in Tauris.[86] [17] I myself have often seen this place and admired it extremely, and have imagined that I was in Tauris. For this mountain resembles the other remarkably, as the Tauros is here also and the river Saros is similar to the Euphrates there. [18] So Orestes built there a spectacular city and two temples, one to Artemis and another to his sister Iphigeneia, which the Christians have made into sanctuaries for themselves without changing their structure at all. [19] This is even now called Golden Komana,[87] being named from the hair of Orestes, which they say he cut off there and so was freed of his affliction. [20] But some say that this disease from which he escaped was nothing else than the madness which seized him when he killed his own mother. But I now return to the previous narrative.

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82. Or Akilisene.

83. Prokopios is referring to the tale told in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris*. Iphigeneia had been whisked away by Artemis before she could be sacrificed by her father, Agamemnon, and made a priestess of the goddess in Tauris, usually understood to be the Crimea. Meanwhile, Orestes is haunted by madness after murdering his own mother Klytaimnestra, and Apollo tells him to steal the statue of Artemis from Tauris. He travels there with his friend Pylades, eventually recognizes Iphigeneia, and all flee with the statue.

84. Hair in Greek is *kômê*, whence (apparently) comes the name of the city of Komana.

85. Prokopios is referring here to Komana Hierokaisareia, in Pontos by the Yeşılırmak (Iris) river, not Komana in Kappadokia.

86. Prokopios is here referring to Komana in Kappadokia, by the Seyhan (Saros) river. According to Strabo, *Geography* 12.3.32, it was Pontic Komana that was patterned after the one in Kappadokia, not vice versa.

87. E.g., in *Novel* 31.1.2.

[21] From the Tauric Armenians and the land of Kelesene, the Euphrates river, flowing to the right,[88] passes through extensive territory and, as many rivers join it and among them the Arsinos,[89] whose copious stream flows down from the land of the so-called Persarmenians, it naturally becomes a great river and flows into the land of the people formerly called White Syrians but now known as the Lesser Armenians, whose leading city, Melitene, is especially noteworthy. [22] From there it flows past Samosata, Hierapolis, and all the regions there as far as the land of the Assyrians, where the two rivers unite with each other into one stream which bears the name of the Tigris. [23] The land outside the Euphrates river, beginning with Samosata, was called in ancient times Kommagene but is now named after the river. But the land inside the river, that is between it and the Tigris, is appropriately named Mesopotamia; however, a part of it is called not only by this name but also by certain others. [24] For the land as far as the city of Amida is called Armenia by some, while Edessa and the regions around it are called Osroene, after Osroes, a man who was king in that place in former times, when the men of this country were allies of the Persians.[90] [25] After the Persians had taken from the Romans the city of Nisibis and certain other places in Mesopotamia,[91] whenever they were about to march against the Romans, they would disregard the land outside the Euphrates river, which was for the most part dry and empty of men, and gathered themselves here with no trouble, as they were in a land controlled by them which lay very close to the inhabited land of the enemy, and so they always made their invasions from here.

[26] When Mihran, defeated in battle and with the greater part of his men lost, came back to Persia with the rest of his army, he received bitter punishment at the hands of king Kavad. [27] For he stripped him of a decoration that he was accustomed to bind on the hair of his head, made of gold and pearls. This is a great dignity among the Persians, second only to that of the king. [28] For there it is unlawful to wear so much as a gold ring, belt, brooch, or anything else, except by royal permission. [29] Kavad then began to consider how he himself should march against the Romans. For after Mihran had failed in the manner I have told, he felt confidence in no one else. [30] While he was at a loss as to what to do, al-Mundhir, the king of the Saracens, came before him and said:

al-Mundhir to Kavad

> Not everything, O Master, should be entrusted to chance[92] nor should one believe that all wars ought to be successful. For this is not likely and, besides, it is not the lot of human beings, so this idea is most disadvantageous for those who are held by it. [31] For when men who expect that all good things will come to them fail at any one time, if it so happens, they are distressed more than is seemly by the very hope that wrongly led them on. [32] Thus, as men have not

88. I.e., of the Tigris.

89. Or Arsanias, the modern Murat river.

90. Osroes was a Nabatean who broke away from Seleucid control in 120 BC.

91. In 363, after the failure of Julian's expedition.

92. The same expression at 5.24.9.

> always had confidence in chance, they do not enter into the danger of war in a straightforward way, even if they boast that they surpass the enemy in every respect, but they exert themselves to overcome their opponents through deception and stratagems. [33] For those who assume the risk of an even struggle have no assurance of victory. Now, then, O king of kings, do not be so distressed by the misfortune that befell Mihran, nor desire to try your luck again. [34] For in Mesopotamia and the land of Osroene, as it is called, as it is very close to your boundaries, the cities are stronger than all others and contain a multitude of soldiers such as never before, so that if we go there the contest will not be safe. But in the land lying outside the Euphrates river, and in Syria which adjoins it, there is neither a fortified city nor an army of any importance. [35] I have often heard this from the Saracens sent as spies to these parts. [36] There too, they say, is the city of Antioch, which is the first of all cities belonging to the Romans of the East in wealth, size, and population; and this city is unguarded and has no soldiers. [37] For its people care for nothing else than festivals, luxurious living, and their constant rivalries with each other in the theaters. [38] So, if we go against them unexpectedly, it is not at all unlikely that we will capture the city by a sudden attack and then return to the land of the Persians without having met any hostile army, even before the soldiers in Mesopotamia have learned what has happened. [39] As for the lack of water or any kind of provisions, let that be no concern to you, for I myself will lead the army wherever seems best.

[40] When Kavad heard this he could neither oppose nor distrust the plan. For al-Mundhir was most intelligent and experienced in matters of warfare, thoroughly faithful to the Persians, and unusually energetic; a man who for a space of fifty years forced the Roman state to its knees.[93] [41] He plundered the whole country from the boundaries of Egypt as far as Mesopotamia, pillaging one place after another, burning the buildings in his track, and capturing the population by the tens of thousands, most of whom he killed for no reason while he returned the rest for great sums of money.[94] No one at all confronted him. [42] For he never made his inroad without prior thought, but so suddenly did he move and so very advantageously for himself that, as a rule, he was already off with all the plunder when the generals and soldiers were only beginning to learn what had happened and to gather themselves against him. [43] If, indeed, by any chance, they were able to catch him, this barbarian would fall upon his pursuers while they were still unprepared and not in battle array, and would rout and destroy them with no trouble. One time he captured all the soldiers who were pursuing him along with their officers. [44] These were Timostratos, the brother of Rouphinos, and Ioannes, the son of Loukas, whom al-Mundhir gave up later, thus gaining for himself

93. Al-Mundhir III (r. 505–554), ruler in the Nasrid dynasty (previously called the kingdom of the Lahkmids), whose capital was at al-Hirah.

94. For raids by al-Mundhir, see pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 8.5a. Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.59, records that in 531 he decapitated some of his captives, inducing the others to write to the bishop of Antioch and beg to be ransomed; the people of the city took up a collection.

no mean or trivial wealth.[95] [45] In a word, this man became the most difficult and dangerous enemy of all to the Romans. The reason was this, that al-Mundhir, holding the position of king, ruled alone over all the Saracens in Persia and he was always able to make his invasion with the whole army wherever he wished in the Roman domain. [46] No commander of the Roman soldiers, whom they call *duces*, nor any leader of the Saracens allied with the Romans, who are called *phylarchs*,[96] was strong enough to array his men against al-Mundhir; for in each district there were stationed insufficient men to fight the enemy. [47] For this reason the emperor Justinian put al-Harith, the son of Jabalah, who ruled over the Saracens of Arabia, in command of as many tribes as possible and bestowed upon him the dignity of king,[97] a thing which had never before been done among the Romans. [48] However, al-Mundhir continued to harm the Roman affairs just as much as before, if not more, as al-Harith was either extremely unlucky in every inroad and every battle, or else he turned traitor as quickly as he could. For as yet we know nothing certain about him. Thus it came about that al-Mundhir, with no one to stand against him, plundered the whole East for a very long time, for he lived to a most advanced age.

18. Kavad was, at that time, pleased by this man's suggestion and he chose out fifteen *531*
thousand men, putting in command of them Azarethes, a Persian warrior and exceptionally capable, and he instructed al-Mundhir to guide the expedition. [2] So they crossed the Euphrates river in Assyria and, after passing by some uninhabited country, they suddenly and unexpectedly invaded the land called Kommagene. [3] This was the first invasion made by the Persians from this point into Roman land, as far as we know from tradition or any other means, and its unexpectedness astonished all the Romans. [4] When Belisarios learned this news, at first he was at a loss but afterward he decided to go to the rescue with all speed. He established a sufficient garrison in each city in case Kavad came with another enemy army and found the towns of Mesopotamia utterly unguarded. He himself with the rest of the army went to meet the invasion. Crossing the Euphrates river they advanced in great haste. [5] Now the Roman army amounted to about twenty thousand foot and horse, and among them not less than two thousand were Isaurians. [6] The cavalry commanders were the same ones who had previously fought the battle at Daras with Mihran and the Persians, while the infantry were commanded by one of the spearmen of the emperor Justinian, Petros by name. [7] The Isaurians, however, were under the command of Longinos and Stephanakios. Al-Harith also came there to join them with the Saracen army.[98] [8] When they reached the city of

95. Timostratos and Ioannes (*duces* on the eastern frontier) were captured in 523 and released in 524. Justin sent a special envoy to secure their release (Abraham, the father of Nonnosos).

96. I.e., "tribal leaders."

97. Al-Harith V (r. 528–569), ruler in the Jafnid dynasty (previously called the kingdom of the Ghassanids). He is usually called *phylarchos* in the sources, including inscriptions, not king.

98. Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.60, records that al-Harith had five thousand men.

Chalkis, they encamped and remained there, as they had learned that the enemy were in a place called Gabboulon, 110 stades away from Chalkis. [9] When this became known to al-Mundhir and Azarethes,[99] they were terrified at the danger and no longer continued their advance, but decided to withdraw homeward instantly. They began to march back with the Euphrates river on the left, while the Roman army followed in the rear. [10] In the spot where the Persians bivouacked each night the Romans always stayed on the following night. [11] For Belisarios purposely refused to allow the army to cover a greater distance because he did not wish to come to an engagement with the enemy, but he considered that it was sufficient for them that the Persians and al-Mundhir, after invading the land of the Romans, should withdraw from it and return to their own land without accomplishing anything. [12] Because of this everyone secretly mocked him, both officers and soldiers, but not a man reproached him to his face.

[13] Finally the Persians made camp on the bank of the Euphrates just opposite the city of Kallinikon.[100] From there on they were about to march through an absolutely uninhabited country and thus to leave the land of the Romans; [14] for they no longer had any intention of proceeding as before, keeping to the bank of the river. The Romans had passed the night in the city of Soura and, departing from there, came

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upon the enemy in the act of preparing for the departure. [15] Now the feast of Easter was near and would take place on the following day; this feast is celebrated by the Christians above all others, and on the day before it they are accustomed to refrain from food and drink not only throughout the day, but they also continue the fast for a large part of the night. [16] Belisarios, seeing that all his men were passionately eager to go against the enemy, wished to persuade them to give up this idea (for this course had been recommended to him by Hermogenes also, who had come recently on an embassy from the emperor); he accordingly called together all who were present and spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman army

[17] O Romans, where are you going? What has happened to you that you are intent on involving yourselves in an unnecessary danger? Men believe that there is only one type of unalloyed victory, namely to suffer no harm at the hands of the enemy, and this very thing has been given to us at present by chance and by the enemy's fear of us. [18] Therefore it is better to enjoy the benefit of our present blessings than to seek them when they have passed. The Persians, led on

99. Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.60, adds that Sounikas at this point killed many of their scouts and raiding parties, an unauthorized action that angered Belisarios.

100. We have two more independent accounts of the battle near Kallinikon: by Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.60; and by pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.4a. It is believed that Malalas' account, which does not feature Belisarios' infantry stand, makes him look worse than does that of Prokopios, but we should remember that we have only an abridgment of Malalas and that Prokopios makes the general seem weak and unable to control his army. Jordanes, *Romana* 363, stresses that the fault lay with the army, not the general. Prokopios also omits the official inquiry into the cause of the defeat (Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.60–61), which led to Belisarios' replacement and recall; but on this issue, see *Wars* 3.9.25.

> by many hopes, marched against the Romans and now, with everything lost, are fleeing from us. [19] If we compel them against their will to abandon their plan to withdraw and force them to come to battle with us, we will win no advantage whatsoever even if we are victorious. [20] Why should one rout an enemy in flight? But if we fail, as may happen, we will be deprived of the victory that we now have, not robbed of it by the enemy, but flinging it away ourselves, and also we will abandon the land of the emperor to lie open hereafter to the attacks of the enemy without defenders. [21] Moreover, this also is worth your consideration, that God likes to help men in dangers that are necessary, not those that they choose for themselves. [22] Apart from this, it is also true that those who have nowhere to turn will fight bravely even against their will, while the obstacles that we will encounter in a battle are many. [23] For a large number of you have come on foot and all of us are fasting. I refrain from mentioning that some even now have not arrived.

That is what Belisarios said.

[24] But the army began to insult him, not in silence or concealment, but they came shouting to his face, calling him soft and a dissolver of their zeal. Even some of the officers joined with the soldiers in this offense, thus displaying the extent of their daring. [25] Belisarios, in astonishment at their shamelessness, reversed his exhortation and now appeared to be urging them on against the enemy and drawing them up in formation, saying that he had not known before their sheer eagerness to fight, but now he was of good courage and would go against the enemy in high hopes. [26] He then formed the phalanx with a single front, disposing his men as follows. On the left wing by the river he stationed all the infantry, while on the right where the ground rose sharply he placed al-Harith and all his Saracens. He himself with the cavalry took his position in the center. Thus did the Romans array themselves. [27] When Azarethes saw the enemy gathering into formation, he exhorted his men with the following words:

Azarethes to the Persian army

> Persians as you are, no one would deny that you would not give up your valor in exchange for life, if you had to make a choice between the two. [28] But I say that even if you wanted it to be so, it is not within your power to make the choice between the two. Men who have the opportunity to escape from danger and live in dishonor find it not at all unreasonable, if they wish, to choose what is most pleasant instead of what is best. But for men bound to die, either gloriously at the hands of the enemy or shamefully led to punishment by your lord, it is extreme folly not to choose what is better instead of what is most shameful. [29] Now, then, when things stand so, I consider that it befits you all to bear in mind not only the enemy but also your own Master, and so enter this battle.

[30] After Azarethes also had uttered these words of exhortation, he stationed the phalanx opposite his enemies, assigning the Persians the right wing and the Saracens the left. Straightway both sides began the fight, and the battle was extremely fierce. [31] For the arrows, shot from both sides in great numbers, caused massive loss of life in both armies, while some placed themselves in the interval between the armies and performed

valorous deeds against each other. But more Persians were falling to the arrows, in great numbers. [32] For while their volleys were far more dense, as the Persians are almost all archers and are taught to shoot much more rapidly than any other men, [33] still they shoot from bows that are weak and not strung very tightly, so that their missiles, hitting the breastplate, perhaps, or helmet or shield of a Roman soldier, were deflected and had no power to hurt the man who was hit. [34] Roman archers, by contrast, are always slower but inasmuch as their bows are extremely stiff and tightly strung, and one might add that they are handled by stronger men, they easily slay much greater numbers of those they hit than do the Persians, for no armor proves an obstacle to the flight of their arrows. [35] Now already two parts of the day had passed and the battle was still even. Then by mutual agreement all the best men in the Persian army advanced to attack the Roman right wing, where al-Harith and the Saracens had been stationed. [36] The latter broke formation and moved apart, so that they won the reputation of having betrayed the Romans to the Persians. For without awaiting the oncoming enemy they all rushed into flight. [37] So the Persians in this way broke through the enemy line and immediately got behind the Roman cavalry. The Romans were already exhausted both by the march and the labor of the battle, and besides this they were all fasting so far on in the day. Now that they were assailed by the enemy on both sides, they held out no longer. Most of them fled at full speed to the islands in the river that were close by, while some remained there and performed deeds both amazing and remarkable against the enemy. [38] Among them was Askan who, after killing many of the notables among the Persians, was gradually hacked to pieces and finally fell, leaving the enemy with ample reason to remember him. And with him eight hundred others perished after showing themselves brave men in this struggle, and almost all the Isaurians fell with their leaders, without even daring to lift their weapons against the enemy. [39] For they were thoroughly inexperienced in this business, as they had recently left off farming and entered into the perils of warfare, which before that time were unknown to them. [40] Yet just before these men had been the most eager of all for battle because of their ignorance of warfare, and were then reproaching Belisarios with cowardice. They were not in fact all Isaurians but the majority were Lykaones.

[41] Belisarios with a few men remained there, and as long as he saw Askan and his men holding out he also held back the enemy together with those who were with him; [42] but when some of Askan's men had fallen and the others had turned to flee wherever they could, then at length he too fled with his men and came to the phalanx of infantry, who with Petros were still fighting, although they were not many in number now, as most of them too had fled. [43] There he gave up his horse and commanded all his men to do the same and, on foot with the others, to fight off the oncoming enemy. [44] Those of the Persians who were following the men in flight, after pursuing for only a short distance, immediately returned and charged the infantry and Belisarios with the others. The Romans then turned their backs to the river, so that they might not be surrounded by the enemy, and, as best they could under the circumstances, defended themselves against their assailants. [45] And again the battle became fierce, although the two sides were not evenly matched in strength, for foot soldiers, and few of them

at that, were fighting against the whole Persian cavalry. Still, the enemy were unable to rout them or in any other way overpower them. [46] For standing shoulder-to-shoulder, they kept themselves grouped at all times in a small space and barricaded themselves most securely behind their shields, so that they shot at the Persians more conveniently than they were shot at by them. [47] Many a time after giving up, the barbarians would advance against them again determined to break up and destroy their line, but they always withdrew again from the assault unsuccessful. [48] For their horses, frightened by the clashing of the shields, reared up and made confusion for themselves and their riders. Both sides continued the struggle until it had become late in the day. [49] When night had come on, the Persians withdrew to their camp and Belisarios, accompanied by a few men, found a freight-boat and crossed over to the island in the river, which the other Romans reached by swimming. [50] On the next day the Romans were conveyed to the city of Kallinikon by many freight-boats that came to them from there, while the Persians, after despoiling the dead, all departed homeward. However, they did not find their own dead less numerous than the enemy's.

[51] When Azarethes reached Persia with his army, although he had done well in the battle, he found Kavad extremely ungrateful, for the following reason. [52] It is a custom among the Persians that when they are about to march against any of their foes the king sits on the royal throne and many baskets are set there before him. The general also is present who is expected to lead the army against the enemy, and the army passes along before the king, one man at a time, and each of them throws one arrow into the baskets. After this they are sealed with the king's seal and placed in a secure location. When the army returns to Persia, each of the soldiers takes one arrow out of the baskets. [53] Those whose office it is to do so count all the arrows that have not been taken by the men, and they report to the king the number of the soldiers who have not returned, and in this way it becomes evident how many have perished in the war. [54] Thus the law has stood of old among the Persians. Now when Azarethes came into the presence of the king, Kavad asked him whether he came back with any Roman fortress won over to their side, for he had marched forth with al-Mundhir against the Romans for the purpose of subduing Antioch. Azarethes said that he had captured no fortress but had defeated the Romans and Belisarios in battle. [55] So Kavad instructed the army of Azarethes to pass by, and from the baskets each man took out an arrow as was customary. [56] As many arrows were left, Kavad rebuked Azarethes for the victory and thereafter held him in disgrace. So the victory had this result for Azarethes.

19. At that time the emperor Justinian conceived the idea to recruit the Ethiopians and the Himyarites in order to injure the Persians. I will first explain what part of the earth these nations occupy and then how the emperor hoped that they would benefit the Romans. [2] The boundaries of Palestine extend toward the east to the sea called the Red Sea. [3] This sea, beginning at India,[101] comes to an end at this point in the Roman

101. "India" was a term that could refer to eastern Africa, including the Horn.

domain. And there is a city called Aila on its shore, where the sea comes to an end, as I said, and becomes a narrow gulf. As one sails into the sea from there, the Egyptian mountains lie on the right, extending toward the south; on the other side a country deserted by men extends northward to an indefinite distance; and the land on both sides is visible as one sails along as far as the island called Iotabe, not less than one thousand stades distant from the city of Aila.[102] [4] On this island Hebrews had lived of old in autonomy, but in the reign of this Justinian they have become subject to the Romans. [5] From there on comes a great open sea. Those who sail into this part of it no longer see the land on the right, but they always anchor along the left coast at night. [6] For it is impossible to navigate this sea in the dark, as it is everywhere full of shoals. [7] But there are many harbors there made not by the hand of man but by the natural contours of the land, and for this reason it is not difficult for mariners to find anchorage wherever they happen to be.

This coast immediately beyond the boundaries of Palestine is held by Saracens, [8] who have of old been settled in the Palm Groves. [9] These groves are in the interior, extending over a great tract of land, and absolutely nothing else grows there except palm trees. [10] The emperor Justinian had received these palm groves as a present from Abu Karib, the ruler of the Saracens there, who was appointed by the emperor as tribal leader over the Saracens in Palestine.[103] [11] At all times he preserved the land intact from plunder, for Abu Karib always inspired fear and seemed to be exceptionally energetic both to the barbarians over whom he ruled and no less to the enemy. [12] Formally, therefore, the emperor holds the Palm Groves, but it is altogether impossible for him really to take possession of any of the country there. [13] For a land completely destitute of human presence and absolutely dry lies in between, extending to the distance of a ten days' journey; moreover, the Palm Groves themselves are not worth anything: Abu Karib only gave the form of a gift, and the emperor accepted it in full knowledge of the fact. So much for the Palm Groves. [14] Adjoining this people are other Saracens in possession of the coast, who are called Maddenoi and are subjects of the Himyarites.[104] [15] These Himyarites dwell in the land on the other side of them by the shore of the sea. Beyond them many other nations are said to be settled as far as the man-eating Saracens. [16] Beyond these are the nations of India. But regarding these matters let each one speak as he may wish.

[17] Across from the Himyarites, on the opposite mainland, dwell the Ethiopians who are called Axumites, because their royal capital is the city of Axum. [18] The sea that lies between is crossed in a voyage of five days and nights when a moderately favoring wind blows. [19] For here they are accustomed to navigate by night also, as there are no shoals at all in these parts. This sea has been called the Red Sea by some. The sea that one traverses beyond this point as far as the shore and the city of Aila has received the

102. Possibly the island of Tiran at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba.

103. Abu Karib, the *phylarchos* of the Saracens in Palestine (by Palaestina Tertia) between 528 and at least 543, was the brother of the Jafnid Roman ally al-Harith.

104. I.e., the Maʿadd tribal confederacy.

name Arabian Gulf, [20] for the country that extends from here to the limits of the city of Gaza used in ancient times to be called Arabia, as the king of the Arabs had his palace in early times in the city of Petra.[105] [21] The harbor of the Himyarites from which they are accustomed to put out to sea for the voyage to Ethiopia is called Boulikas, [22] and when they sail across the sea they always put in at the harbor of the Adoulitai, although the city of Adoulis is removed from the harbor a distance of twenty stades (that is how far it is from being on the sea), while from the city of Axum it is a journey of twelve days.

[23] All the boats that are found in India and on this sea are not made in the same way as other ships. They are smeared neither with pitch nor any other substance, nor indeed are the planks fastened together by iron nails going through and through, but they are bound together with a kind of cording. [24] The reason is not what most people suppose, that there are certain rocks there which draw the iron to themselves (witness the fact that when Roman ships sail from Aila into this sea, although they are fitted with much iron, no such thing has ever happened to them), but rather because the Indians and the Ethiopians possess neither iron nor any other thing suitable for such purposes. [25] Furthermore, they are not even able to buy any of these things from the Romans as this is explicitly forbidden to all by law. [26] Death is the punishment for anyone who is caught. Such, then, is the description of the so-called Red Sea and the land that lies on either side of it.

[27] From the city of Axum to the Egyptian boundaries of the Roman empire, where the city called Elephantine is situated, is a journey of thirty days for an active traveler. [28] Many nations are settled in that interval, among them the Blemyes and the Nobatai, who are most populous nations. But the Blemyes dwell in the central part of this expanse while the Nobatai hold the territory about the river Nile. Formerly the limit of the Roman empire was not here, but it lay beyond there as far as one would advance in a seven days' journey.[106] [29] Diocletian, the emperor of the Romans, came there and *298*
observed that the tribute from these places was negligible, as the land is at that point extremely narrow (for rocks rise to an extremely great height at a small distance from the Nile and spread over the rest of the country), while a very large body of soldiers had of old been stationed there, the maintenance of whom was an excessive burden on the public. At the same time the Nobatai who formerly lived about the city of Oasis used to plunder the whole region there, so he persuaded these barbarians to move from their own habitations and settle along the Nile river, and he promised to bestow upon them great cities and land both extensive and incomparably better than that which they had previously occupied.[107] [30] In this way he thought they would no longer harass the villages and land about Oasis and would relocate to the land given them, as being their own, and would probably repulse the Blemyes and the other barbarians. [31] As this pleased the Nobatai, they made the migration immediately, just as Diocletian directed

105. I.e., the kings of the Nabatean Arabs.

106. The former boundary lay south of Aswan.

107. The territory abandoned was known as Dodekaschoinos ("Twelve Mile Land").

them, and took possession of all the Roman cities and the land on both sides of the river beyond the city of Elephantine. [32] Then it was that this emperor decreed that a fixed sum of gold should be given to them and to the Blemyes every year with the stipulation that they no longer plunder the land of the Romans. [33] And they receive this gold even up to my time, but no less overrun the country there. Thus it seems that with all barbarians there is no means of compelling them to keep faith with the Romans except through the fear of soldiers to hold them in check. [34] Yet this emperor went so far as to select a certain island in the Nile river close to the city of Elephantine and there construct a very strong fortress in which he established certain temples and altars for the Romans and these barbarians to use in common. He settled priests of both nations in this fortress, thinking that the friendship between them would be secure by reason of their sharing sacred customs. [35] Hence he named the place Philai.[108] Now both of these nations, the Blemyes and the Nobatai, believe in all the gods in which the Greeks believe, and they also revere Isis and Osiris, and not least of all Priapus. [36] But the Blemyes are accustomed also to sacrifice human beings to the Sun. These sanctuaries at Philai were kept by these barbarians even up to my time, but the emperor Justinian decided to abolish them.
ca. 535 [37] Accordingly Narses, a Persarmenian by birth, whom I mentioned before as having
or 542 deserted to the Romans,[109] and who was in command of the soldiers there, tore down the sanctuaries at the emperor's order, put the priests under guard, and sent the statues to Byzantion. But I return now to the previous narrative.

20. At the time of this war Ella Asbeha, the king of the Ethiopians, who was a Christian and a most devoted adherent of this faith,[110] discovered that the Himyarites on the
523 opposite mainland were oppressing the Christians there outrageously; many of them were Jews, and many revered the old faith which men of the present day call Hellenic.[111]
525 He therefore collected a fleet of ships and an army and came against them, conquered them in battle, and slew both the king and many of the Himyarites. He then set up in his place a Christian king, a Himyarite by birth whose name was Esimiphaios,[112] and, after ordaining that he pay a tribute to the Ethiopians every year, he returned home. [2]

108. The name actually originated from Egyptian *Pilak*; its Greek form Philai had long been in use.

109. 1.12.20–22, 1.15.31.

110. Ella Asbeha, the *negus* of Axum (whom Prokopios calls Hellestheaios; ca. 517–533), also had the Biblical name Kaleb.

111. The kingdom of Himyar was at this time a Jewish one. Ella Asbeha had previously invaded Himyar between 518 and 522 and had imposed Christianity, albeit briefly. In response, the Jewish king of Himyar, Yusuf (known by other names in the different traditions, e.g., dhu Nuwas), had instigated a persecution of Christians at Najran in 523, which was widely reported. We have a nearly contemporary account, *The Martyrdom of Arethas*, probably translated from a Syriac original. These events gave rise to a confusing dossier of texts that range widely in their reliability. The emperor Justin seems to have assisted the Ethiopian conquest of Himyar in 525.

112. His name seems to have been Sumyafa Ashwa'.

In this Ethiopian army there were many slaves and others who were readily disposed to crime, and they were quite unwilling to follow the king back but were left behind and remained there because of their desire for the land of the Himyarites; for it is an extremely good land.

[3] Not long after this, these army units in company with certain others rose up against King Esimiphaios, confined him in one of the forts there, and established another king *ca. 527* over the Himyarites, Abramos by name.[113] [4] This Abramos was a Christian, a slave of a Roman who resided in the city of Adoulis in Ethiopia and was engaged with work at sea. [5] When Ella Asbeha learned this, he was eager to punish Abramos along with those who had revolted with him for their injustice against Esimiphaios, and he sent against them an army of three thousand men with one of his relatives as commander. [6] But this army too was unwilling to return home and they wished to remain there in that good land; so without the knowledge of their commander they opened negotiations with Abramos. Then, when they came to an engagement with their opponents, just as the fighting began, they killed their commander and joined the ranks of the enemy, and so remained there. [7] Ella Asbeha became furious and sent another army against them. This force engaged with Abramos and his men and, after suffering a severe defeat in the battle, immediately returned home. Thereafter the king of the Ethiopians was afraid and sent no more expeditions against Abramos. [8] After the death of Ella Asbeha, Abramos agreed to pay tribute to the king of the Ethiopians who succeeded him, and in this way he strengthened his rule. But this happened at a later time.

[9] At the time when Ella Asbeha was reigning over the Ethiopians and Esimiphaios *ca. 528* over the Himyarites, the emperor Justinian sent an ambassador, Ioulianos, demanding that both join the Romans in the war against the Persians on account of their community of religion. In this way, the Ethiopians, by purchasing silk from India and selling it to the Romans, would themselves gain much money while causing the Romans to profit in only one way, namely, that they would no longer be forced to pay over their money to their enemy. (This is the silk out of which they are accustomed to make the garments which the ancient Greeks called Mede but which today they call Seric.)[114] As for the Himyarites, they were to establish the fugitive Qays as tribal leader over the Maddenoi and, with a great army of their own people and of the Maddenoi Saracens, invade the land of the Persians. [10] This Qays came from a family of tribal leaders and was an exceptionally able warrior, but he had killed one of the relatives of Esimiphaios and was a fugitive in a land that is utterly destitute of human habitation.[115] [11] So

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113. Also known as Abraha.

114. After the Seres, i.e., Chinese. The silk trade is discussed at *Secret History* 25.13–26, and see also 8.17.1–8 here.

115. The relations of Qays (Kaïsos in Greek) with Rome are difficult to date. He was visited a number of times by Justinian's ambassadors, including Nonnosos, who wrote a detailed account of his travels to Axum (still ruled by Kaleb) and to Qays during these years (Photios, *Bibliotheke* cod. 3). Finally, Qays was persuaded to go to Constantinople in 531, and eventually he was placed in charge of Palestine in some way and also of his previous tribal followers.

each king, promising to put this demand into effect, dismissed the ambassador, but neither of them did the things to which they agreed. [12] For it was impossible for the Ethiopians to buy silk from the Indians, as the Persian merchants always go to the very harbors where the Indian ships first put in (given that they inhabit the adjoining country), and tend to buy up whole cargoes; and it seemed to the Himyarites a difficult thing to enter a desert that extended over such a distance that it required much time to cross, only to go against a people much more warlike than themselves. [13] Later on Abramos too, when he had established his power most securely, promised the emperor Justinian many times to invade the land of Persia, but only once began the journey and then immediately turned back.[116] Such then were the relations which the Romans had with the Ethiopians and the Himyarites.

21. Hermogenes, as soon as the battle on the Euphrates had taken place, came before Kavad to negotiate with him, but he accomplished nothing regarding the peace on account of which he had come, as he found him still swelling with rage against the Romans. For this reason he returned unsuccessful.[117] [2] Belisarios came to Byzantion at the summons of the emperor, having been removed from the office that he held, in order that he might march against the Vandals.[118] [3] Sittas, as decreed by the emperor Justinian, went to the east in order to guard it. [4] Then the Persians again invaded Mesopotamia with a large army under the command of the *kanarang*, of Aspebedes, and of Mihr-Mihroe.[119] [5] As no one dared to engage with them, they made camp and began a siege of Martyropolis, where Bouzes and Bessas had been stationed in command of the garrison. [6] This city lies in the land called Sophanene, 240 stades from the city of Amida toward the north; it is just on the river Nymphios that divides the lands of the Romans and the Persians.[120] [7] So the Persians began to attack the circuit-walls and, while the besieged at first withstood them manfully, it did not seem likely that they would hold out long. [8] For the circuit-wall was easily assailable in most places and could be captured easily by a Persian siege;[121] besides, they did not have a sufficient supply of provisions, nor engines of war nor anything else of value

late 531

116. This cannot be dated. An inscription of Abraha records an invasion by him of central Arabia, but in 552, so Prokopios cannot have known about it yet.

117. According to Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.61, the Persians captured the fortress of Abgersaton in Osroene; in June 531, Justinian sent Rouphinos but Kavad would not receive him.

118. 3.9.25.

119. This Persian attack was in response to the defeat by Bessas, the *dux* of Martyropolis, of a Persian army that had invaded via Amida earlier that summer, followed by Bessas' raid on Arzanene, and the capture of Persian forts by Dorotheos, the general of Armenia, around the same time (Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.65–66; pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.5–6a). The ensuing Persian attack on Martyropolis is also recounted by Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.66 (with details on the siege operations); and pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.6a–c (on the cold of the season).

120. The modern river Batman.

121. For the defenses of Martyropolis, see *Buildings* 3.2.

for defending themselves. [9] Meanwhile, Sittas and the Roman army came to a place called Attachas, which was one hundred stades distant from Martyropolis, but they did not dare to advance farther; they made camp and remained there. [10] Hermogenes was with them, coming again as ambassador from Byzantion. At this point the following event took place. *Oct. or Nov. 531*

[11] The custom from ancient times among both the Romans and the Persians is to maintain spies at public expense.[122] These men go secretly among the enemy in order to investigate accurately what is going on, return, and report to the rulers. [12] Many of these men, as is only natural, are eager to be loyal to their nation, but some betray secrets to the enemy. [13] At that time a certain spy who had been sent from the Persians to the Romans came into the presence of the emperor Justinian and revealed many things that were taking place among the barbarians and, in particular, that the nation of the Massagetai,[123] in order to injure the Romans, were on the point of going into the land of Persia and, from there, they were prepared to march into the territory of the Romans together with the Persian army. [14] When the emperor heard this, having already a proof of the man's truthfulness to him, he presented him with a generous sum of money and persuaded him to go to the Persian army that was besieging the people of Martyropolis. He was to announce to the barbarians there that these Massagetai had been won over with money by the emperor of the Romans and were about to come against them that very moment. [15] And he carried out these instructions: coming to the army of the barbarians he announced to the *kanarang* and the others that an army of Huns hostile to them would soon come to the Romans. [16] When they heard this, they were seized with terror and were at a loss how to deal with the situation.

[17] At this time it came about that Kavad became seriously ill. He summoned one of his closest associates among the Persians, Mahbod by name, and talked with him about Chosroes and the kingdom, expressing a fear that the Persians would be eager to disregard some of his arrangements. [18] Mahbod then asked him to leave a declaration of his purpose in writing, and told him to be confident that the Persians would never dare to disregard it. [19] So Kavad set it down plainly that Chosroes should become king over the Persians. The document was written by Mahbod himself, and Kavad then passed from among men.[124] [20] When everything had been performed according to custom in the burial of the king, then Kavus, confident in the law, lay claim to the office, but Mahbod stood in his way, asserting that no one ought to assume the royal power by his own initiative but by the vote of the Persian notables. [21] So Kavus committed the decision in the matter to the magistrates, supposing that there would be no opposition to him from there. [22] But when all the Persian notables had been gathered *13 Sept. 531*

122. Cf. *Secret History* 30.12–14 for Justinian's demotion of the corps.

123. I.e., the Sabeiroi Huns.

124. The Persian tradition also recorded that Kavad "nominated his son Kisra as his successor in the royal power, and wrote this out in a document, which he sealed with his seal ring"; al-Tabari, *History* 888 (p. 138). Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.68, says that Kavad even crowned Chosroes.

together for this purpose and were in session, Mahbod read out the document and stated the purpose of Kavad regarding Chosroes. Then all, recalling the virtue of Kavad, immediately declared Chosroes king of the Persians.[125]

[23] Thus then Chosroes took power. But at Martyropolis, Sittas and Hermogenes were in fear concerning the city, as they were utterly unable to defend it in its peril, and they sent certain men to the enemy, who came before the generals and spoke as follows:

Sittas and Hermogenes to the Persian generals

> [24] It has escaped your notice that you are wrongfully becoming an obstacle to the king of the Persians, the blessings of peace, and both of our republics. For ambassadors sent from the emperor are even now present in order to go the king of the Persians and there settle our differences and establish a treaty with him. So remove yourselves from the land of the Romans as quickly as possible and permit the envoys to act in a way that will benefit both peoples. [25] Concerning these very things we are prepared also to give as hostages men of high rank, to prove that these things will be actually accomplished soon.

Such were the words of the ambassadors of the Romans. [26] It happened also that a messenger came to them from the palace, who announced to them that Kavad had died and Chosroes, the son of Kavad, had become king over the Persians, and in this way their affairs became unsettled. [27] As a result of this the generals heard the words of the Romans gladly, as they feared also an attack by the Huns. The Romans therefore immediately gave as hostages Martinos and one of Sittias' spearmen, named Senekios. *Dec. 531* So the Persians broke up the siege and made their departure promptly. [28] The Huns not long after invaded the land of the Romans, but as they did not find the Persian army there, they made their raid a short one and then all departed homeward.[126]

22. Thereupon Rouphinos, Alexandros, and Thomas came to act as ambassadors *early 532* with Hermogenes, and they all came before the king of the Persians at the Tigris river.[127] [2] When Chosroes saw them, he released the hostages. Then the ambassadors coaxed Chosroes and spoke many flattering words unbecoming to Roman ambassa-

125. The Persian historian Ibn Isfandiyar (ca. 1217), reports in his *History of Tabaristan* (E. G. Browne, *An Abridged Translation of the History of Tabaristan* [Leiden and London, 1905], 93–94) that Kavus rebelled against Chosroes, and was killed; Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.69, refers to his rebellion, without names. Theophanes, *Chronographia* a.m. 6016 (p. 170; presumably based on the original of Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.30), calls him Phthasouarsas, i.e., Shah of Padhashkvar (Tabaristan), and claims he was a Mazdakite ("Manichean").

126. The raid is described by pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.6c (Bessas killed some of them and became rich). Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.70, seems to place this raid later in 531, during the truce between Rome and Persia, and he has Dorotheos, general of Armenia, chase them out and recover their plunder, after Rouphinos had informed him that they were not there at the invitation of the Persian king.

127. In fact, when Chosroes became king he asked the envoys to come to him from Edessa, but they refused, because they had been forbidden to do so by Justinian. Chosroes then wrote to Justinian, but he refused to recognize him. It was only after Chosroes had suppressed the

dors. [3] This made Chosroes tractable and he agreed to establish an endless peace with them for the price of 110 *kentenaria*, on condition that the commander of the soldiers in Mesopotamia should no longer be at Daras, but should spend all his time in Konstantine, as was customary in former times. The fortresses in Lazike he refused to give back, although he himself demanded that it was just for him to receive back from the Romans both Pharangion and the fortress of Bolon. [4] (A *kentenarion* weighs a hundred pounds, whence its name; for the Romans call one hundred *centum*.) [5] He demanded that this gold be given him so that the Romans would not be required either to tear down the city of Daras or to share the garrison at the Caspian Gates with the Persians. [6] The ambassadors, while approving the rest, said that they were not able to concede the fortresses without first asking the emperor about them. [7] It was decided, then, that Rouphinos would be sent concerning them to Byzantion, while the others waited for his return. It was arranged that seventy days would be allowed for his return. [8] When Rouphinos reached Byzantion and reported to the emperor what Chosroes' proposal for the peace, the emperor commanded that peace be concluded by them on these terms.

[9] In the meantime, however, a report that was not true reached Persia saying that the emperor Justinian had become enraged and put Rouphinos to death. Chosroes was shaken up by this and, already filled with anger, came against the Romans with his whole army. But Rouphinos met him on the way as he was returning, not far from the city of Nisibis. [10] Therefore they proceeded to this city themselves and, as they were about to establish the peace, the ambassadors began to convey the money there. [11] But the emperor Justinian was regretting that he had given up the strongholds of Lazike and he wrote a letter to the ambassadors expressly commanding them by no means to hand them over to the Persians. [12] For this reason Chosroes no longer saw fit to make the treaty. Then it occurred to Rouphinos that he had counseled more speedily than safely in bringing the money into the land of Persia. [13] So he threw himself to the ground and, lying prone, entreated Chosroes to send the money back with them and not march immediately against the Romans, but to postpone the war. [14] Chosroes instructed him to rise and promised that he would grant all these things. So the ambassadors with the money came to Daras and the Persian army marched back.

[15] Then the fellow ambassadors of Rouphinos began to regard him with extreme suspicion and they denounced him to the emperor, arguing that Chosroes had been persuaded to concede to him everything that he asked of him.[128] [16] But the emperor showed him no disfavor on account of this. Not long after this Rouphinos himself and *summer*
Hermogenes were again sent to Chosroes and they immediately came to an agreement *532*
with each other concerning the treaty, subject to the condition that both sides should give back all the places that each had wrested from the other in that war, and that there

Mazdakites and his brother's rebellion that Justinian instructed Hermogenes to establish a three-month truce during which to negotiate for the peace (Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.68–69).

128. Pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.7a–b, positively presents the close ties that Rouphinos had with Kavad and Chosroes.

should no longer be a military command at Daras. As for the Iberians, it was agreed that the decision rested with them, that is, whether they would remain there in Byzantion or return to their own land. And there were many who remained, and many also who returned to their ancestral homes. [17] Thus they concluded the so-called Endless Peace, when the emperor Justinian was already in the sixth year of his reign.[129] [18] The Romans gave the Persians Pharangion and the fortress of Bolon along with the money, and the Persians gave the Romans the strongholds of Lazike. The Persians also returned Dagaris to the Romans and received in exchange for him another man of no mean station. [19] This Dagaris in later times often defeated the Huns in battle when they invaded the land of the Romans, and drove them out; for he was an exceptionally able warrior. Thus both sides in the manner described made secure the treaty between them.

23. It then immediately came about that plots were formed against both rulers by their subjects. I will now explain how this happened. Chosroes, the son of Kavad, was of unstable mind and irrationally fond of innovations. [2] For this reason he himself was always full of excitement and alarms, and always instilled similar feelings in all others. [3] All, therefore, who were men of action among the Persians hated his regime and were planning to establish over themselves another king from the house of Kavad. [4] *ca. 532* As they greatly longed for the rule of Zamasp, which was precluded by the law because of the loss of his eye, as has been stated,[130] they found upon consideration that the best course for them was to establish in power his son Kavad, who bore the same name as his grandfather, while Zamasp, as guardian of the child, would administer the affairs of the Persians as he wished. [5] So they went to Zamasp, disclosed their plan, and, urging him on with great enthusiasm, incited him to it. As the plan pleased him, they were thinking of attacking Chosroes at the right time. But the plan was revealed to the king and the plot was foiled. [6] Chosroes killed Zamasp himself, all his brothers (who were the brothers of Zamasp too), all their male offspring, and also all the Persian nobles who had either begun or taken part in any way in the plot against him. Among these was Aspebedes, the brother of Chosroes' mother.

[7] Kavad, however, the son of Zamasp, he was quite unable to kill, for he was still being raised by the *kanarang* Adurgundad. Chosroes sent a message to the *kanarang* instructing him to kill the boy whom he had reared, for he did not deem it right to mistrust the man nor did he have the power to compel him. [8] The *kanarang*, upon hearing the commands of Chosroes, was extremely grieved and, lamenting the misfortune, communicated to his wife and to Kavad's nurse all that the king had commanded.[131] Then the woman, bursting into tears and grasping her husband's knees, entreated him

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129. A clause that Prokopios omits, but that was supplied by Agathias, *Histories* 2.30–31, stipulated that Justinian would not harass or persecute the Platonist philosophers of Athens, who had sought refuge with Chosroes when Justinian closed their schools in 529. That clause was likely written by Damaskios himself, whom Agathias may have been quoting.

130. 1.11.4.

131. The story at this point echoes that of Cyrus in Herodotos, *Histories* 1.108–24.

by no means to kill Kavad. [9] They consulted together and planned to raise the child in the most secure concealment, and to send word in haste to Chosroes that Kavad had been done away with. [10] They sent word to the king to this effect and concealed Kavad in such a way that the affair did not come to the notice of anyone except Bahram, their own child, and one of the servants who seemed to them to be in every way most trustworthy. [11] But when, as time went on, Kavad came of age, the *kanarang* began to fear that these actions might be brought to light, so he gave Kavad money and urged him to leave and save himself by flight wherever he could. At that time, Chosroes and all the others did not know that the *kanarang* had carried this plan through.

[12] At a later time Chosroes was making an invasion into the land of Kolchis with *541*
a large army, as will be told in the following book.[132] [13] He was followed by the son of this *kanarang*, Bahram, who took with him a number of his servants, among them the one who shared with him the knowledge of what had happened to Kavad. While there Bahram told the king everything regarding Kavad and he produced the servant, who agreed with him in every particular. [14] When Chosroes learned this, he was furiously angry and considered it a terrible thing to have suffered such things at the hands of his slave. As he had no other means of getting the man in his power, he devised the following plan. [15] When he was about to return home from the land of Kolchis, he wrote to this *kanarang* that he had decided to invade the land of the Romans with his whole army, not, however, by a single entry point but by dividing the Persian army into two to direct the invasion against the enemy on both sides of the Euphrates river. [16] As was natural, he himself would lead one division of the army into the hostile land, while he would grant the privilege of holding equal honor with the king in this matter to no one else of his slaves except the *kanarang* himself, because of his valor. [17] It was necessary, therefore, that the *kanarang* should come speedily to meet him as he returned, in order that he might confer with him and give him all the instructions that would be of advantage to the army; he was also to instruct his attendants to travel behind him on the road. [18] When the *kanarang* received this message, he was overjoyed at this honor from the king and, in complete ignorance of his own evil plight, he immediately carried out these orders. [19] But in the course of this journey, as he was quite unable to endure the toil of it (for he was a very old man); he relaxed his hold on the reins and fell off his horse, breaking the bone in his leg. It was therefore necessary for him to remain there at rest and be cared for, and the king came to that place and saw him. [20] Chosroes said to him that with his leg in such a state it was impossible for him to march with them, but that he must go to one of the fortresses in that region and receive treatment there from the physicians. [21] Thus Chosroes sent the man away on the road to death, and behind him followed the very men who were to kill him in the fortress, he who both was and had a reputation for being an invincible general among the Persians, who had marched against twelve nations of barbarians and subjected them all to king Kavad. [22] After Adurgundad had been removed from the world, Bahram, his son, received

132. 2.17.

ca. 543 the office of *kanarang*. [23] Not long after this either Kavad himself, the son of Zamasp, or someone else who was assuming the name of Kavad came to Byzantion; certainly he greatly resembled king Kavad in appearance. [24] The emperor Justinian was in doubt about him, but still received him with great kindness and honored him as the grandson of Kavad. Thus fared the Persians who rose up against Chosroes.

[25] Later on Chosroes did away also with Mahbod for the following reason. The king was handling some important matter and directed Zabergan who was present to call Mahbod. Now it happened that Zabergan was on hostile terms with Mahbod. When he came to him, he found him marshaling the soldiers under his command, and said that the king was summoning him as quickly as possible. [26] Mahbod promised that he would follow as soon as he had arranged the matter in hand, but Zabergan, moved by his hostility to him, reported to Chosroes that Mahbod was unwilling to come at the present time, claiming to have some business or other. [27] This angered Chosroes who sent one of his attendants to command Mahbod to go to the tripod. I will explain what this is. [28] An iron tripod stands always before the palace. Whenever any Persian learns that the king is angry with him, it is not right for such a man to flee for refuge to a sanctuary nor to go elsewhere, but he must seat himself by this tripod and await the verdict of the king, while no one at all dares protect him. [29] There Mahbod sat in pitiable plight for many days, until someone seized him and put him to death at the command of Chosroes. Such was the final outcome of his good deeds to Chosroes.

24. At this same time an insurrection broke out unexpectedly in Byzantion among the populace and, contrary to expectation, took on huge dimensions and ended in *Jan. 531* great harm to the people and to the senate, as the following account will show. [2] In every city the fan-clubs have long been divided into the Blues and the Greens,[133] but in relatively recent times it has come about that, for the sake of these names and the grandstands from which they watch the games,[134] they spend money and give their bodies over to the most cruel tortures, and even do not think it unworthy to die a most shameful death. [3] They fight against the rival faction without knowing why they are putting themselves at such risk, but they do know well that, even if they overcome their enemy in the fight, the outcome for them will be to be carried off immediately to prison and, after suffering extreme torture, to be destroyed. [4] So there grows in them against their rivals a hatred that has no cause, and at no time does it cease or disappear, for it does not soften for the ties of marriage, kinship, or friendship, even if those who are divided by color are brothers or the like. [5] They care not for things divine or human when it comes to winning in these struggles, and simply do not care whether a sacrilege is committed by anyone against God, or whether the laws and the republic are being violated by friend or foe, and this is so even if they are poor and lacking basic things or

133. For Justinian, Theodora, and the fan-clubs, see also *Secret History* 7.1–42, 9.29–46.

134. The Blues and the Greens had designated grandstands in the hippodrome, next to each other and facing the imperial box on the opposite side of the racetrack.

if their fatherland is in the most pressing need and suffering unjustly, they still do not care; all that matters is that it goes well with their "faction," for so they name the bands of partisans. [6] Even women join them in this unholy strife, and they not only follow the men but even fight them if that is how it turns out, even though they neither go to the spectacles at all nor are led by any other cause to get involved. So that I, for my part, do not know what to call this if not a mental disorder. This, then, is pretty much how matters stand among the people of each and every city.

[7] It was at this time, then, that the magistracy in charge of the populace in Byzantion led away some of the militants to be executed.[135] The two sides then came to an understanding with each other and made a truce; they seized those who had been arrested and broke into the jail, releasing all who were locked up there on charges of sedition or some other felony.[136] [8] All the staff of the urban magistracy were killed for no reason, while all the law-abiding citizens were fleeing to the opposite continent.[137] The city was set to the torch as if it had been taken by enemies. [9] The temple of Sophia, the baths of Zeuxippos, and the imperial courtyard from the Propylaia all the way to the so-called House of Ares were burned up and destroyed, as were both of the great porticos that lead to the forum that is named after Constantine, the houses of prosperous people, and a great deal of other properties.[138] [10] The emperor, his wife, and some Senators shut themselves up in the palace and kept quiet. The fan-clubs now fixed upon a watchword, *Nika*, and this was the name that the uprising would bear until the present day.[139]

[11] The praetorian prefect at that time was Ioannes the Kappadokian while Tribonianos, a Pamphylian by origin, was the emperor's advisor, which office the Romans call *quaestor*. [12] The first of these two men, Ioannes, had not even heard of liberal education or culture. He learned nothing at grammar school other than the

135. This magistracy was the urban prefecture, held in early 532 by Eudaimon. He sent three militants to be impaled and four to the gallows on 10 January, but two survived when the scaffold broke, one Blue and one Green. Some monks took them to a sanctuary, which Eudaimon surrounded with soldiers. At the races three days later, on Tuesday 13 January, the fan-clubs clamored for the men's pardon. Justinian made no response, and a riot ensued when the fan-clubs joined forces. (The notes will summarize the information given about the course of the riot by our two other main sources, Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.71, and the *Paschal Chronicle* s.a. 532.)

136. The rioters attacked the *praetorium* on the evening of Tuesday 13 January and set fire to it. It was located on the south side of the main avenue of Constantinople (the *Mese*), between the forum of Constantine and the hippodrome.

137. I.e., to the Asian side of the Bosporos.

138. These buildings (and others not mentioned by Prokopios) were not all set on fire on the same day; his narrative compresses events. The church of Hagia Sophia was the predecessor of the one built by Justinian after the riots. The baths of Zeuxippos, the most popular and magnificent in the city, were adjacent to the palace grounds to the northeast of the hippodrome. In addition to other works of art, they housed an impressive collection of ancient statues. The Senate house burned along with the courtyard known as the Augousteion and the main gate of the palace (called the Propylaia here).

139. *Nika* ("Win!") was what the fan-clubs chanted at the races.

letters themselves, and poorly at that. But through the strength of his natural ability he became the most powerful man of our times,[140] [13] for he was the most capable at knowing what had to be done and at finding solutions to practical problems. However, he also became the most wicked of all men and bent all the force of his nature to it. No divine commandment or shame before his fellow man ever entered into him; rather, his concerns were to destroy the lives of many people for the sake of profit and to pull down entire cities. [14] In a short time he acquired a vast fortune and threw himself into a lifestyle of unrestrained drunken debauchery. Up to lunchtime each day he would plunder the property of his subjects while for the rest of the day he would devote himself to drinking and lustful bodily gratification. [15] As he could not in any way control himself, he ate until he threw up and was always ready to steal money—though he was even more ready to bring it out and spend it. Such a person, then, was Ioannes.[141] [16] Tribonianos, on the other hand, was also quite talented and was, moreover, second to none of his contemporaries when it came to the extent of his learning. But he was also abnormally addicted to making money and was always ready to sell justice to make a profit. Just about every day he would repeal some laws and propose others, selling each service according to the needs of his customers.[142]

[17] Now, so long as the populace was divided against itself and fighting on behalf of the names of these colors, no attention was paid to the crimes that those men were committing against the public interest. But when the fan-clubs came to an understanding, as I said, and began the uprising, they openly insulted these two men throughout the city and went about searching for them to kill. Hence the emperor, who wanted to win the populace back to his side, instantly dismissed both of them from their offices.[143] [18] He appointed Phokas, a patrician, as praetorian prefect; this was a prudent man endowed by nature with a fine sense of justice.[144] He also ordered Basileides to take up the office of *quaestor*; he was known among the patricians for fairness and was in other respects esteemed.[145] [19] But even on these terms the uprising still raged no less than

140. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 1.138.3, on Themistokles.

141. Prokopios' judgment regarding Ioannes the Kappadokian was shared by other contemporaries, for example Ioannes Lydos.

142. Tribonianos was the legal scholar behind the compilation and final version of Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, which was under production at this time.

143. The rioters called for their dismissal as well as for the dismissal of the urban prefect Eudaimon on Wednesday 14 January, when Justinian tried to restart the games to pacify the crowds. These three men were the highest officials in the capital at that moment.

144. Phokas, a pagan who later took his life in a purge by Justinian (545/546) instigated by Yuhannan of Amida, was praised also in the highest terms by Ioannes Lydos, *On the Magistracies* 3.72–76; see also *Secret History* 21.6.

145. Basileides, Konstantiolos, and Mundo had previously been sent out to hear the rioters' demands and returned to report that they were demanding the dismissal of Ioannes, Eudaimon, and Tribonianos.

before.[146] On the fifth day of the uprising, late in the afternoon, the emperor Justinian commanded Hypatios and Pompeïos, the nephews of the late emperor Anastasios, to go home immediately, either because he suspected that they were plotting harm against his person or else because destiny led them to this. [20] But they were afraid that the populace might force them to claim the imperial position, which is in fact what happened, and so they said that it would not be right for them to abandon their emperor when he found himself in such a perilous position. [21] Hearing this, the emperor Justinian grew all the more suspicious and commanded them to leave right then and there. So these two men went to their homes and, for as long as it was night, remained there quietly.[147]

[22] But at dawn on the next day the people found out that these two men were no longer in the palace. So the entire populace rushed to them, proclaimed Hypatios emperor, and made as if to convey him to the forum where he would take charge of events.[148] [23] But Hypatios' wife, Maria, a discreet woman with the greatest reputation for prudence, took hold of her husband and would not let go, crying out in despair and pleading with all her friends and kinsmen that the fan-clubs were leading him away on the path to his death. [24] Overpowered by the press of people, however, she let go of her husband against her will and so the people led him, against his wishes too, to the forum of Constantine where they called him to the throne. Not having a diadem at hand, nor any of the things with which it is customary to invest an emperor, they placed a gold torque upon his head and acclaimed him as the emperor of the Romans. [25] The members of the Senate had already assembled—however many, that is, who were not still in the emperor's court—and many opinions were expressed about how they should go to the palace and fight. [26] But Origenes, a senator, stepped forward and said the following:[149]

> Our present state of affairs, O Romans, cannot be settled except by war. Now it is understood that war and imperial power are the most momentous things in human life. [27] But great actions are accomplished not by the shortness of the time in which they are executed but through sound judgment and hard work,

146. When the dismissal of his top three officials had no immediate effect, Justinian, probably still on Tuesday 13 January, sent out Belisarios with some Gothic soldiers to attack the militants. In response, the latter burned down more of the city and, on Wednesday 14 January, rushed to the house of Probos (consul in 502), a nephew of the emperor Anastasios (r. 491–518), to acclaim him emperor. He was—wisely—not at home, and his older cousins were in the palace (see below). They set fire to his house, but it did not catch. On Saturday 17 January there was widespread fighting in the city between the rioters and army units that were brought in from Thrace, each side setting additional parts of the city on fire to smoke out the other.

147. This was probably in the evening and night of Saturday 17 January.

148. On the morning of Sunday 18 January, Justinian appeared in the hippodrome in an attempt to negotiate with the rioters. When this failed the latter went off to find Hypatios.

149. Origenes is likely a figure invented by Prokopios to deliver this speech. At the time that Prokopios was finishing the *Wars*, Justinian was trying to have the third-century theologian Origenes declared a heretic.

> which people exercise over lengths of time. [28] If, then, we march out against the enemy, our cause will be balanced upon a razor's edge and we will risk everything in but a moment; for the sake of forcing an outcome, we will either have to give thanks to Fortune afterwards or blame her for everything. [29] For the most hazardous matters tend to fall in most cases under the dominion of Fortune. But if, on the other hand, we handle the present circumstance with caution and planning, we will be unable to seize Justinian in the palace even though we wish to do so, but he also will gladly seize the opportunity to flee the moment someone presents it to him. [30] And power that is scorned tends to collapse as its foundations weaken day by day. And we have other palaces besides, the Plakillianai and the other one named after Helene,[150] which our own emperor here can use as his base to conduct the war and govern other matters in the most advantageous way.

[31] That was what Origenes said. But the others, as crowds tend to do, were all for hazarding the issue and believed that instant action was in their interest, not least among them Hypatios (for it was necessary that he end up badly). He commanded them to head for the hippodrome. And some even said that he went there on purpose, because he was really on the emperor's side.[151]

[32] Those with the emperor were holding a meeting to decide whether it would be better for them to stay or to take to the ships in flight. Many speeches were made on either side. [33] And Theodora the empress also spoke as follows:

> The impropriety of a woman speaking boldly among the men or stirring up those who are cringing in fear is hardly, I believe, a matter that the present moment affords us the luxury of examining one way or another. [34] For when you reach the point of supreme danger nothing else seems best other than to settle the matter at hand in the best possible way. [35] I believe that flight, now more than ever, is not in our interest even if it brought us to safety. For it is not possible for a man who is born not also to die, but for one who has reigned it is intolerable to become a fugitive. [36] May I *never* be parted from the purple! May I *never* live to see the day when I will not be addressed as Mistress by all in my presence! Emperor, if you wish to save yourself, that is easily arranged. [37] We have much money; there is the sea; and here are our ships. But consider whether, after you have saved yourself, you would then gladly exchange safety for death. For my part, I like that old saying, namely that kingship is a good burial shroud.[152]

150. Or Flaccillianae, after Aelia Flacilla, the first wife of Theodosius I; this palace was under rebel control, as insignia were brought from there for Hypatios' use. The Helenianai were possibly named after Constantine the Great's mother, Helene.

151. Some sources suggest that when Hypatios was taken to the hippodrome he sent a message to Justinian telling him that he had assembled all of his enemies for him to do with as he pleased. He then received the false information that Justinian had fled, whereupon he "began to sit more confidently in the imperial box."

152. The "old saying" actually has *tyranny* instead of *kingship*, and was said by the notorious tyrant Dionysios of Syracuse when a popular uprising besieged him in his palace. Prokopios



Mosaic of Theodora and her retinue from the basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna.

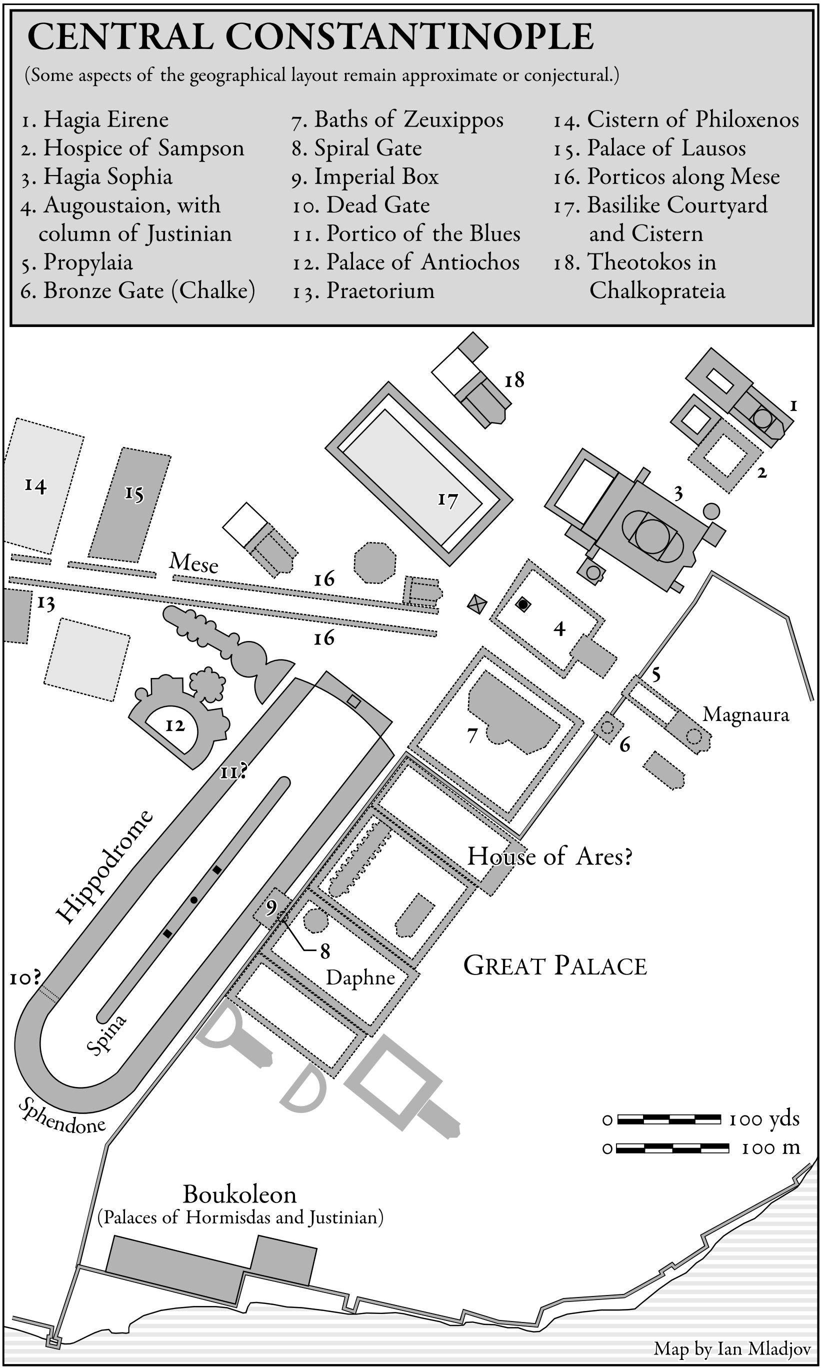
[38] When the empress spoke these words, all the others were emboldened and turned to thoughts of prowess, considering how they might defend themselves if the enemy moved against them. [39] All the soldiers, both those stationed at the imperial court and all the rest, were not favorably disposed toward the emperor nor willing to take a side openly; rather, they were waiting to see how events would turn out. [40] The emperor placed all of his hopes on Belisarios and Mundo, the first of whom had just returned from the war against the Medes leading a strong and formidable force, in particular a large number of his spearmen and guardsmen who were trained in the actual struggles and dangers of war. [41] As for Mundo, he had been appointed general of Illyria and, by some chance, happened to have been summoned to Byzantion for some purpose, and had with him Herul barbarians.

[42] When Hypatios reached the hippodrome, he immediately went up to the place where the emperor is accustomed to sit and there he sat on the imperial throne, from where the emperor watches the horse races and gymnastic contests. [43] Mundo, meanwhile, left the palace from the gate which is called the Spiral because of the way in which it winds around as you go down.[153] [44] As for Belisarios, at first he went straight up for Hypatios and the imperial throne,[154] but when he reached the nearest structure, where

made a subtle substitution that would have been recognized only by those who, like himself, had a classical education.

153. Mundo's route took him to the south (curved) end of the hippodrome; he and Belisarios would attack the crowd from opposite ends of the hippodrome.

154. Belisarios' first attempt was through the passage that connected the palace to the imperial box in the hippodrome.



Map of the Palace and Hippodrome of Constantinople.

a military guard has been posted since ancient times, he called out to the soldiers and ordered them to open the door immediately so that he could attack the rebel. [45] But the soldiers had decided to assist neither side until one had unequivocally won, so they evaded him by pretending not to hear. [46] Belisarios turned back and informed the emperor that all was lost, [47] for the soldiers in the palace guard were now in revolt against him. The emperor commanded him to go to the Bronze Gate and the Propylaia there. [48] Belisarios, with difficulty and not without great danger and exertion, crossed the smoldering ruins and went up to the hippodrome. [49] When he reached the portico of the Blues, which is to the right of the imperial throne,[155] he decided to move against Hypatios himself first but, as the gateway there was small and also closed and guarded on the inside by Hypatios' soldiers, he was terrified that the entire populace would fall upon him and his company while they were fighting in that narrow place and kill them all; and then it would be easy for them to move against the emperor, in fact no trouble at all. [50] Realizing now that he had to move against the populace that had occupied the hippodrome—a multitude beyond number, being pushed this way and that in great disorder—he drew his sword from its scabbard, ordered the others to follow his lead, and rushed at them with a cry. [51] The populace was in a press standing around in no particular order. When the people saw the armored soldiers, men who had earned great fame for their courage and knowledge of war, striking with their swords and giving no quarter, they rushed headlong into flight. [52] There was a great outcry, as can only be expected. Mundo, meanwhile, had been standing somewhere nearby, spoiling for a fight (for he was a daring and energetic man), but he did not know what to do in the present circumstances. When he ascertained that Belisarios was already hard at work, he immediately charged into the hippodrome through the entrance that they call the Dead Gate. [53] And then Hypatios' militants began to die as they were being attacked violently from both sides. Finally, when the rout was undeniable and a great slaughter of the people had already been done, Boraïdes and Ioustos, the cousins of the emperor Justinian, pulled Hypatios down from the throne without anyone daring to lift a hand against them, and they marched him off to the emperor, delivering him along with Pompeïos. [54] More than thirty thousand of the populace died that day. The emperor commanded that the two men be imprisoned in harsh conditions. [55] Pompeïos was by then crying and speaking pitiful words. For he had little experience of such trials and misfortunes. Hypatios rebuked him severely and said that it was unbecoming for those who were about to be killed unjustly to lament their fate. [56] For at first they were forced against their will by the populace and later, when they went to the hippodrome, it was not to harm the emperor. The soldiers executed both of them on the next day and their bodies were flung into the sea. [57] The emperor confiscated their properties to the treasury along with the properties of all the other senators who sided with them.[156] [58]

155. I.e., as one sits on that throne. Belisarios' second attempt took him around the north side of the hippodrome, through the ruins of the Bronze Gate.

156. For confiscations, see also *Secret History* 12.12, 19.12, 26.3.

But later he restored to the children of Hypatios, Pompeïos, and all the rest the titles that they had held along with as much of their property as he had not already given away to his own associates. That was the end of the uprising in Byzantion.

25. Tribonianos and Ioannes, having been dismissed from office in this way, were at a later time both restored to those same positions. [2] Tribonianos survived in office for many years and died of illness, suffering no further harm from anyone. For he was a smooth talker and pleasant in every other way, as well as capable of casting the shadow of his prodigious learning over his addiction to profit.[157] [3] But Ioannes was overbearing to all people and severe, harming everyone he met and plundering their entire property for no good reason. He remained in office for another ten years,[158] at which point he paid a just and fitting penalty for the criminality of his conduct. It happened in the following way.

[4] The empress Theodora hated Ioannes more than any other person. While he came into conflict with her because of his criminal acts,[159] he made no effort whatever to endear himself to her or win her favor; rather, he openly set himself up as her enemy and slandered her to the emperor, neither respecting her station nor feeling any shame before the amazing affection that the emperor had for her. [5] When she perceived what was happening, she pondered how she might kill the man, yet she could find no plan that would work because Justinian valued him so greatly. [6] But when Ioannes discovered what the empress had in mind for him, he was thoroughly terrified. [7] Whenever he entered his bedroom to sleep, he imagined every night that one of the barbarians would attack and kill him. He was always peeping out of his room and keeping watch over the entrances, so that he rarely slept at all, even though he kept thousands of personal guards and field marshals in his employ, something that no prefect before him had done. [8] But when morning came, all his fears of God and man would flee from him and he would again become the ruin of the Romans, both in public and in private. He consorted all the time with poisoners and magicians and was constantly soliciting sacrilegious oracles that portended for him the imperial office; it was manifest that he was "walking on the air and suspended up there" by the hope that he would gain the throne.[160] [9] Never did he give his wickedness a rest nor did he desist from his lawless way of life. [10] He had no regard at all for the word of God; in fact, if he ever entered a temple in order to pray and keep a night vigil, he did not in any way behave in accordance with the customs of the Christians but donned a worn cloak of the kind appropriate for a priest of the old faith, which now they tend to call Hellenic, and for the duration of the night he would murmur some unholy words that he had memorized, in

157. See also *Secret History* 13.12, 20.16–17. He may have died when the plague hit Constantinople in 542.

158. Ioannes was reappointed praetorian prefect a few months after the riots. He held that position until 541.

159. But see *Secret History* 17.38. Theodora did not care about his crimes; the feud was personal.

160. Aristophanes, *Clouds* 225–228 (also at *Secret History* 13.11, 18.29, and 20.22).

this way hoping to bend the emperor's mind even more to his own will and to protect himself against all harm that might come to him from other people.

[11] At this time Belisarios, having subjugated Italy,[161] was recalled along with his wife, Antonina, to Byzantion by the emperor in order to march against the Persians. [12] While everyone else held him in honor and high regard, as was reasonable, Ioannes alone bore him ill will and positively plotted against him for no other reason than that *he* drew the odium of all people upon himself whereas Belisarios was esteemed more than anyone else. With the hopes of the Romans upon his shoulders, he immediately marched off against the Persians, leaving his wife behind in Byzantion.[162] [13] Now Antonina, the wife of Belisarios, was the most crafty of all people when it came to devising means by which to accomplish the impossible. In order to ingratiate herself with the empress, she contrived the following scheme. Ioannes had a daughter, Euphemia, who had a noted reputation for discretion but was still very young and, because of this, was quite vulnerable. Her father simply adored her, for she was his only child. [14] Antonina now cultivated a relationship with this girl over a period of many days and managed to win her absolute trust, in part because she did not even hesitate to reveal some of her own secrets to her. [15] Then one day, when she was alone with her in the room, she pretended to lament her present misfortunes, alleging that even though Belisarios had made the Roman empire so much larger than it had been previously and had delivered two captive kings and such enormous amounts of treasure to Byzantion, he had found Justinian to be ungrateful. And in other respects she maligned the current administration for its lack of justice. [16] Euphemia was overjoyed at these words for she too hated the current rulers because of her terror of the empress. "But for all this, dearest friend," she said, "you yourselves are responsible, given that you are not willing to use the power that you currently have at your disposal." [17] Antonina quickly took up that thought: "But we are not able, my daughter, to attempt a rebellion in the armies unless someone inside the administration joins in our attempt. Now if your father were willing, then we could easily put it into motion and accomplish all that God wants."

mid-541

[18] When Euphemia heard this, she eagerly promised that it would be done. Departing from there, she immediately brought the matter to her father's attention. [19] He was pleased by the news for he fantasized that this would be the way by which the oracles about his ascent to the throne would be fulfilled. He heedlessly agreed and told his daughter to arrange a meeting with Antonina on the next day so that they could discuss the matter and give pledges. [20] When Antonina learned Ioannes' intentions, she wanted to lure him as far away from the truth of the matter as was possible. So she said that it was not advantageous for her to meet with him now, in case some suspicion arose that could hinder their enterprise. She was about to depart for the East, to join up with Belisarios. [21] So when she had put Byzantion behind her and come to the

161. 6.30.30.

162. The scurrilous explanation for Antonina staying behind this time is given at *Secret History* 2.1–2.

suburb named Rouphinianai (which happened to be the property of Belisarios),[163] there Ioannes could come to her on the pretext that he was bidding her farewell and seeing her on her way; and then they could talk about the totality of things and give and receive pledges of trust. This plan seemed well put to Ioannes, and a day was appointed to carry it out. [22] Meanwhile, the empress heard it all from Antonina and had nothing but praise for the plot and urged her on, making her even more eager to see it through.

May 541 [23] When the appointed day came, Antonina bade the empress farewell and left the city. She stopped at Rouphinianai as if intending to depart on her eastward journey the following day. That night Ioannes arrived in accordance with the agreement. [24] But the empress, having denounced to her husband the things that Ioannes was doing to usurp the throne, sent the eunuch Narses and Markellos, the commander of the palace guard, to Rouphinianai with a large company of soldiers and instructions to investigate what was going on.[164] If they found that Ioannes was plotting a rebellion, they were to kill the man on the spot and come back. [25] So these men left to carry out these orders. But they say that the emperor found out what was happening and dispatched one of Ioannes' friends to him with orders to absolutely forbid him from meeting with Antonina in secret. [26] Yet Ioannes—seeing as it was necessary for him to end badly—disregarded the emperor's warning. He met Antonina around midnight next to a wall behind which she happened to have stationed the men with Narses and Markellos, so that they could hear what was said. [27] In that place Ioannes let his mouth run, confessing to the plot and swearing the most dread oaths to it.[165] Narses and Markellos suddenly rushed him. [28] In the confusion that ensued—as was only to be expected—Ioannes' guards, who were standing near him, rushed to his aid. [29] One of them struck Markellos with a sword, not knowing who he was, and so Ioannes managed to escape with his men, reaching the city in all haste. [30] If he had been bold enough to go straight to the emperor, I believe that he would have suffered no harm from him. As it was, however, he sought refuge in the sanctuary, thereby giving the empress the opening that she needed to dispose of him according to her wishes.

[31] Thus from being a prefect he became a private citizen; and rising up from that sanctuary he was conveyed to another one in a suburb of the city of Kyzikos; the people of Kyzikos call this suburb Artake. There, against his wishes, he was invested with the garb of a priest, not of course of a bishop but of the rank that they call a presbyter. [32] Now the last thing that he wanted to do was conduct holy services, in case that proved to be an obstacle to his return to office one day; for he was in no way willing to set aside his lofty aspirations. His property was immediately confiscated to the public treasury. [33] The emperor, however, granted him the use of a substantial part of it, for he was still in

163. A suburb on the Asiatic coast of the Sea of Marmara, named after the fourth-century praetorian prefect Rouphinos.

164. Markellos was *comes* of the *excubitores*, the only battle-worthy unit of palatine guards. Eight years later he would undo another plot against Justinian; 7.31–32.

165. According to *Secret History* 2.16, Antonina had already sworn oaths to both Ioannes and Euphemia.

an indulgent mood toward him. [34] Now it was possible for Ioannes to live there outside of all danger in the possession of great wealth, both that which he had secreted away and that which the emperor had granted him, and to enjoy all the luxury that he desired and even, by putting things into perspective, to consider his current lot a happy one. [35] Hence all the Romans were simply disgusted at the man, for after having been more wicked than any demon he was now living a happier life than he deserved. [36] But God, I think, found it intolerable that the retribution of Ioannes should end in this way and so he raised his punishment to a higher level. It came about in the following way.

[37] There was in Kyzikos a bishop named Eusebios, a man who oppressed everyone *ca.*
he met, Ioannes not least among them. The people of Kyzikos denounced him to the *544*
emperor asking that he be brought to justice. [38] But they accomplished nothing, for Eusebios used his considerable influence to counter them. Therefore, some of the young men came to an agreement among themselves and killed him in the marketplace of the city.[166] [39] Now it just so happened that Ioannes was especially hostile to Eusebios and, because of this, suspicion for the murder fell upon him. [40] Men were accordingly sent by the senate to investigate this polluted act. The first thing that they did was to confine Ioannes to prison, and then this man, who had been a prefect so powerful, had been enrolled among the patricians, and mounted the curule seat of the consuls, a position that seems loftier than any other in the Roman state—this man, then, they made to stand naked as a brigand or a common thief and lashed his back repeatedly, forcing him to confess his past deeds. [41] Even though it was not proven beyond a doubt that Ioannes was responsible for Eusebios' murder, it nevertheless seemed as though divine justice was exacting from him punishments on behalf of the entire world. [42] Stripping him of all his property,[167] they placed him nude as he was upon a ship, wrapped in a single cloak, a coarse one at that, purchased for but a few obols. Those in whose charge he was placed ordered him, wherever the ship put in, to beg for bread or obols from passersby. [43] He begged like this all the way until he was delivered to the city of Antinoos in Egypt. This is now the third year that they have kept him there in confinement and under guard. Yet despite his despicable condition, he has not set aside his hopes for the throne and has even contrived to denounce some of the Alexandrians for owing money to the state. This, then, was the punishment for his political career that caught up to Ioannes the Kappadokian ten years after the fact.[168]

26. At that time the emperor again appointed Belisarios general of the East and, sending him to Libya, took over that land, as will be said in later books. [2] When this was made known to Chosroes and the Persians, they took it badly and regretted having

166. Theodora later tortured two young men implicated in this murder to obtain information against Ioannes (*Secret History* 17.38–45).

167. His mansion in Constantinople was given to Belisarios (an indirect way of rewarding Antonina).

168. The story of Ioannes continues at 2.30.49–54.

made peace with the Romans because they perceived that their power was reaching
534 great heights. [3] Chosroes sent envoys to Byzantion to say that he was rejoicing with the emperor Justinian and asked with a laugh to receive his share of the spoils from Libya, on the grounds that the emperor would never have been able to prevail in the war with the Vandals if the Persians had not made peace with him. [4] So then Justinian made a present of money to Chosroes and not long afterward dismissed the envoys.

537 [5] In the city of Daras the following event took place. There was a certain Ioannes there serving in an infantry unit. This man, in collusion with some of the soldiers, but not all, took possession of the city, aiming at a rebellion. [6] Then he established himself in a palace as if in a citadel, and was strengthening his tyranny every day. [7] If it had not happened that the Persians were keeping to their peace with the Romans, irreparable harm would have come from this to the Romans. As it was, this was prevented by the agreement which had already been reached, as I have said. [8] On the fourth day of the tyranny some soldiers came to an agreement and, by the advice of Mamas, the priest of the city, and Anastasios, one of the notable citizens, they went up to the palace at high noon, each man hiding a short sword under his cloak. [9] First, at the door of the courtyard, they found a few of the retainers, whom they immediately killed. Then they entered the men's apartment and seized the tyrant. Yet some say that the soldiers were not the first to do this, but that while they were still hesitating in the courtyard, trembling at the danger, a certain sausage vendor who was with them rushed in with his cleaver and, meeting Ioannes, struck him unexpectedly. [10] The blow was not a fatal one and he fled with great commotion and suddenly fell among these very soldiers. [11] Thus they laid hands upon the man and immediately set fire to the palace and burned it, in order that there might be left no hope from there for those making revolutions. They led him away to the prison and bound him. [12] And one of them, fearing that the soldiers, upon learning that the rebel survived, might again make trouble for the city, killed Ioannes, and in this way ended the disturbance. Such, then, was the outcome of this tyranny.[169]

169. The Anonymous Continuer of Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 536/537, says that his name was Ioannes Cottistis. The story of his plot resembles that of pseudo-Smerdis in Herodotos, *Histories* 3.77–78.

Book Two

1. Not long after this Chosroes, upon learning that Belisarios had begun to acquire Italy also for the emperor Justinian, was no longer able to restrain his plans but he wished to devise pretexts in order to break the treaty for some plausible reason. [2] He conferred with al-Mundhir about this matter and commanded him to provide him with causes for war. *537/*
[3] So al-Mundhir accused al-Harith of violating the boundaries of his land and of entering *539*
into conflict with him in a time of peace, and he began to overrun the land of the Romans on this pretext. [4] He declared that he was not breaking the treaty between the Persians and Romans, for neither of them had included him in it. [5] And this was true, for no mention of Saracens was ever made in treaties on the ground that they were included under the names of Persians and Romans.[170] [6] Now this land which at that time was contested by both tribes of Saracens is called Strata, and extends to the south of the city of Palmyra. It does not produce a single tree or any useful crop, for it is burned extremely dry by the sun, but it has since ancient times been devoted to the pasturage of flocks. [7] Al-Harith maintained that the place belonged to the Romans, proving his assertion by the name that has long been applied to it by all (*strata* signifies a paved road in the Latin tongue), and he also cited the testimonies of the most ancient men.[171] [8] Al-Mundhir, however, was not interested in arguing over the name; rather, he claimed that the owners of the flocks had long been paying him tribute for pasturage there. [9] The emperor Justinian therefore entrusted the settlement of the disputed points to Strategios, a patrician and administrator of the imperial treasury,[172] who was besides wise and noble, and with him went Soummos, who commanded the soldiers in Palestine.[173] [10] Soummos was the brother of Ioulianos, who not long before had served as envoy to the Ethiopians and Himyarites.[174] [11] One of the two men, Soummos, insisted that the Romans should not surrender the country but Strategios begged the emperor not to do the Persians the favor of providing them with the pretexts for war that they already desired, all for the sake of a small bit of worthless land

170. Al-Tabari, *History* 958–959 (pp. 252–53), preserves a Persian version according to which al-Harith was the aggressor and al-Mundhir merely complained to Chosroes, who wrote to Justinian reminding him of the treaty. When he received no response, he invaded the Roman empire (i.e., in 540).

171. This was the *Strata Diocletiana* (locally called *Istrata*); whatever the original extent of the road built by Diocletian (scholars have postulated that it ran from the Euphrates southwest past Palmyra and Damascus along the *limes Arabicus*), the Roman administration in the area tended to use the term loosely.

172. I.e., *comes sacrarum largitionum*.

173. I.e., *dux Palaestinae*. Soummos was the recipient of an oration by Chorikios, *In Praise of Soummos*.

174. Ioulianos went on this mission in late 530 or early 531 (1.20.9). He wrote an account of it that was used by Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.56. He may have accompanied Strategios on this mission too.

that was unproductive and unsuitable for crops. The emperor Justinian took the matter under consideration, and a long time was spent in settling the question.

[12] But Chosroes, the king of the Persians, claimed that the treaty had been broken by Justinian, who had recently displayed great opposition to his house in that he had attempted in a time of peace to suborn al-Mundhir to himself.[175] [13] He claimed that Soummos, who had recently gone to him ostensibly to settle those matters, had promised him large sums of money if he went over to the Roman side, and he brought forward a letter that, he alleged, the emperor Justinian had written to al-Mundhir about these things. [14] He also alleged that Justinian had sent a letter to some of the Huns, urging them to invade the land of the Persians and do extensive damage to their lands. He claimed that the Huns themselves, who had come before him, had put his letter into his hands. [15] So then Chosroes accused the Romans and was planning to break off the treaty. As to whether he was speaking the truth in these matters, I am unable to say.

539 **2.** At this point Vittigis, the leader of the Goths, already worsted in the war, sent two envoys to Chosroes to persuade him to march against the Romans.[176] These men were not Goths, in case they were exposed and frustrated his plan, but Ligurian priests who were attracted to this enterprise by rich gifts of money. [2] One of these men, who seemed to have the higher rank, undertook the embassy by assuming the appearance and title of a bishop which did not belong to him at all, while the other followed as his attendant. [3] In the course of their journey they came to the lands of Thrace where they hired a man from there to be an interpreter of the Syriac and Greek tongues, and without being detected by any Romans they reached the land of Persia. As they were at peace, they were not keeping strict guard over that region. [4] Coming before Chosroes they spoke as follows:

Gothic envoys to Chosroes

In general, O king, all other envoys set out on embassies to gain some advantage for themselves, but we have been sent by Vittigis, the king of the Goths and Italians, in order to speak on behalf of *your* rule; and hear us as if he were now present before you speaking these words. [5] If anyone were to say, O king, putting it all in a word, that you have given up your kingdom and all your men to Justinian, he would be speaking correctly. [6] For he is by nature a troublemaker, he covets things that in no way belong to him, and is unable to abide by the settled order of things, so he has conceived the desire of seizing the entire earth and is eager to acquire for himself each and every state. [7] Accordingly, as he was not able to attack the Persians on his own nor, with the Persians opposing him, to move against the others, he decided to deceive you with the smoke screen of peace and, by forcing the others into subjection, to acquire mighty forces to use against your state. [8] He has already destroyed the kingdom of the Vandals and subjugated the Moors while the Goths stood aside for him because of their friendship; now he has come against us with vast sums of money and many men. [9] It is evident

175. This accusation is confirmed by Prokopios at *Secret History* 11.12; see also 2.3.47 and 2.10.16.
176. 6.22.17.

> that, if he is able also to crush the Goths utterly, he will march against the Persians with us and those he has already enslaved, neither considering the name of friendship nor respecting any of his sworn promises. [10] So while some hope of safety is still left to you, do not do us any further wrong nor suffer it yourself but see in our misfortunes what will a little later happen to the Persians. Consider that the Romans could never be well-disposed to your kingdom; when they become more powerful they will not hesitate at all to display their enmity toward the Persians. [11] Use this option while it presents itself now, so that you not regret it after it has passed. For when the moment of opportunity passes, it is not in its nature to return again. It is better by anticipating to be in security, than to miss your chance and suffer the most miserable fate at the hands of the enemy.

[12] When Chosroes heard this, it seemed to him that Vittigis advised well and he was still more eager to break off the treaty. Moved as he was by envy toward the emperor Justinian, he neglected to consider that these words were spoken to him by men who were bitter enemies of Justinian. [13] Because of what he already wished, he was easily captivated by them. And he did the same thing a little later in the case of the speeches of the Armenians and of the Lazoi, which I will presently recount. [14] Yet they were bringing as charges against Justinian the very things which would naturally be panegyrics for a worthy monarch, namely that he was exerting himself to make his realm larger and much more splendid. [15] These accusations one might make also against Cyrus, the king of the Persians, and Alexander the Macedonian. But justice is never accustomed to live together with envy. For these reasons, then, Chosroes was considering to break off the treaty.

3. During this same time another event also occurred; it was as follows. That Symeon who had given Pharangion to the Romans persuaded the emperor Justinian, while the war was still raging,[177] to give him certain villages of the Armenians. [2] Becoming master of these places, he was plotted against and murdered by those who had formerly owned them. [3] After this crime had been committed, the perpetrators of the murder fled to the territories of Persia. They were two brothers, sons of Peroz. When the emperor heard this, he gave the villages to Amazasp, the nephew of Symeon, and appointed him governor of the Armenians.[178] [4] As time went on, this Amazasp was denounced to the emperor Justinian by one of his associates, Akakios by name, that he was abusing the Armenians and wanted to give Theodosioupolis and certain other fortresses over to the Persians. [5] After reporting this, Akakios, by the emperor's will, killed Amazasp treacherously, and secured from the emperor the command over the Armenians.[179] [6] Being base by nature, he was able to display the content of his character and proved

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177. I.e., in 530/531. For Symeon and Pharangion, see 1.15.27–29.

178. I.e., (probably) *consularis Armeniae Magnae*, between 531 and 536.

179. By 536, and until 538/539, Akakios was *proconsul Armeniae Primae* (see *Novel* 21). For the reform of the provincial administration of Armenia on 18 March 536, creating four provinces, see *Novel* 31.

to be the most cruel of all men toward his subjects. [7] He plundered their property without excuse and imposed on them an unheard-of tax of four *kentenaria*. But the Armenians, unable to bear him any longer, conspired together, slew Akakios, and fled for refuge to Pharangion.

538/539 [8] Therefore the emperor sent Sittas against them from Byzantion. For Sittas had been delaying there since the time when the treaty was made with the Persians.[180] [9] So he came to Armenia but at first entered upon the war reluctantly and made it a priority to calm the people and restore them to their former habitations, promising to persuade the emperor to remit to them the payment of the new tax. [10] But as the emperor kept criticizing him with frequent reproaches for his hesitation, incited by the slanders of Adolios, the son of Akakios, Sittas at last prepared for conflict. [11] First he attempted to persuade and win over some of the Armenians to his cause by promising many good things, in order to make the task of overpowering the others less difficult and painful. [12] The clan called the Aspetianoi, who were great in power and numbers,[181] was willing to join him. [13] They sent to Sittas and begged him to give them pledges in writing that, if they abandoned their kinsmen when matters came to a head and went over to the Roman line, they would remain entirely free from harm, and keep their possessions. [14] Sittas was delighted and put it in writing, giving them pledges just as they had asked; he then sealed the document and sent it to them. [15] Confident that with their help he would be victorious in the war without fighting, he went with his whole army to a place called Oinochalakon,[182] where the Armenians had encamped.[183] [16] But by some chance those who were carrying the letter went by some other road and failed to meet the Aspetianoi. [17] Moreover, a part of the Roman army happened upon a few of them and, not knowing their prior agreement, treated them as enemies. [18] Sittas himself caught some of their women and children in a cave and killed them, either because he did not understand what had happened or because he was angry with the Aspetianoi for not joining him as agreed.

[19] But they were now furious and arrayed themselves for battle with all the rest. As both armies were on extremely rough terrain full of precipices, they did not fight in one place but scattered about among the ridges and ravines. So it happened that some of the Armenians and Sittas with not many of his followers came near to each other with only a ravine lying between them. Both sides were cavalry. [20] Then Sittas with the few men who were with him crossed the ravine and advanced against the enemy; the Armenians, after withdrawing to the rear, stopped, and Sittas pursued no farther but remained where he was. [21] Suddenly someone from the Roman army, a Herul by birth who had been pursuing the enemy, returning in wrath from them came up to Sittas and his men. As

180. Sittas was *magister militum praesentalis*, 530–538/539.

181. This is probably the Bagratuni family, using an alternative family name (Aspetuni) derived from the title *aspet* (cavalry commander).

182. Possibly medieval Avnik, modern Güzelhisar (in Turkey, east of Erzurum).

183. The place is not attested elsewhere.

it happened Sittas had planted his spear in the ground, and the Herul's horse fell upon this with a great rush and shattered it. [22] The general was extremely annoyed by this and one of the Armenians, seeing him, recognized him and said to all the others that it was Sittas. For he was not wearing a helmet. Thus it did not escape the enemy that he had come there with only a few men. [23] Sittas, then, heard the Armenian say this and, given that his spear, as was said, lay broken in two on the ground, drew his sword and attempted immediately to recross the ravine. [24] But the enemy advanced upon him with great eagerness and a soldier overtook him in the ravine and struck him a glancing blow with his sword on the top of his head; he took off the whole scalp but the steel did not injure the bone at all. [25] Sittas continued to press on still more than before, but Artabanes, the son of Ioannes of the Arsakids, rushed him from behind, thrust his spear at him, and killed him. [26] Thus Sittas was removed from the world for no good reason and in a manner unworthy of his valor and continual achievements against the enemy, a man who was handsome in appearance, a capable warrior, and a general second to none of his contemporaries. [27] Yet some say that Sittas did not die by the hand of Artabanes, but that Solomon, a very insignificant man among the Armenians, did away with him.

[28] After Sittas' death, the emperor commanded Bouzes to go against the *539*
Armenians. When he drew near, he sent to them promising that he would reconcile all the Armenians to the emperor and asking that some of their notables come to confer with him on these matters. [29] Now the Armenians as a whole were disinclined to trust Bouzes and did not want to receive his proposals. But there was a certain man of the Arsakids who was very friendly with him, Ioannes by name, the father of Artabanes, who came to him with his son-in-law Vasak and a few others because he trusted in Bouzes as his friend. But when these men had reached the place where they were to meet Bouzes on the following day, and had bivouacked there, they perceived that they were surrounded by the Roman army. [30] Vasak, the son-in-law, strongly advised Ioannes to flee. As he was unable to persuade him, he left him there alone and, taking all the others, eluded the Romans, going back by the same road. [31] Bouzes found Ioannes alone and slew him, after which the Armenians had no hope of ever reaching an agreement with the Romans. As they were unable to prevail over the emperor in war, they came before the king of the Persians led by Vasak, a man of action. [32] The leading men among them came at that time into the presence of Chosroes and spoke as follows:

Armenians to Chosroes

> Many of us, Master, are Arsakids, descendants of that Arsakes who was not unrelated to the Parthian kings when the Persian realm was under the power of the Parthians, and who proved himself an illustrious king, inferior to none of his contemporaries.[184] [33] Now we have come before you as all of us have become slaves and fugitives, not, however, by choice but because we have been

184. Arsakes I of Parthia ruled in the mid-third century BC and founded the royal line named after him. The Arsakid house began to rule intermittently in Armenia starting in the first century AD. At *Buildings* 3.1.6, Prokopios says that, according to a certain *History of the Armenians*, a Parthian king appointed his brother Arsakes to be king of the Armenians (thus the descendants of Arsakes were not Armenians themselves).

compelled. It might seem that this was because of Roman power but in truth, O king, it is because of your decision—[34] if, that is, he who gives the means to those who wish to do injustice justly bears the blame for their misdeeds. Now we will go over past events so that you can follow their whole course. [35] Arsakes, the last king of our ancestors, abdicated his throne willingly for Theodosios, the emperor of the Romans, on condition that all who belonged to his family for the rest of time should govern their own lives and, in particular, should be subject to no taxation.[185] [36] And we have preserved the agreement until you, the Persians, made this notorious treaty that, we think, it would not be wrong to call a pact of universal destruction. [37] From that time you have disregarded both friend and foe, and that man who is in name your friend, O king, but in fact your enemy has turned everything in the world upside down and brought complete confusion. [38] You yourself will realize this quickly, in fact as soon as he is able to subdue completely the people of the West. For what thing that was previously forbidden has he not done? Or what was well established that he has not shaken up? [39] Did he not ordain for us the payment of a tax that did not exist before, and has he not enslaved our neighbors, the Tzanoi, who were autonomous, and has he not set over the king of the wretched Lazoi a Roman governor, an act neither in keeping with the natural order of things nor very easy to explain in words? [40] Has he not sent generals to the men of Bosporos, the subjects of the Huns, taking over the city that in no way belongs to him, and has he not made a defensive alliance with the Ethiopian realms, which the Romans had never even heard of before? [41] He has taken possession of the Himyarites and the Red Sea and is adding the Palm Groves to the Roman realm. [42] We omit to speak about the sufferings of the Libyans and the Italians. The whole earth is not large enough for the man; it is too small a thing for him to conquer all people together. [43] But he is even looking in the heavens and searching in the nooks and crannies beyond the Ocean, wishing to gain for himself some other world.[186] [44] Why, then, O king, do you still delay? Why do you respect that most evil peace, just so that he may make you the last bite of all? [45] If you want to know what kind of a man Justinian shows himself to those who yield to him, an illustration is to be found near at hand: ourselves and the wretched Lazoi. [46] If you wish to see how he tends to treat those who are unknown to him and who have not done him the least wrong,

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185. Armenia was partitioned in 384 or 387 between the Persians (ruling the larger eastern part through client kings) and the Romans (likewise ruling the smaller western part). The Romans annexed their portion ca. 390 (after the death of Arsakes III, so under Theodosius I), though they left the Armenians largely autonomous under a Roman *comes*, while the Persians annexed theirs in 428 (deposing Artaxias IV = Artashir IV). The partition is also described in *Buildings* 3.1.4–15, which says explicitly that it took place under Theodosios II, who is presumably the emperor Prokopios means here in the *Wars* too.

186. This alludes to criticism of Alexander's lust for conquest in ancient sources, e.g., Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.19.6; Ailianos, *Various History* 4.29; Plutarch, *On Tranquility of Mind* 4 (= *Moralia* 466d) and *Alexander* 71.2; and Juvenal, *Satires* 10.168–73.

> consider the Vandals, Goths, and Moors. [47] But the chief thing has not yet been said. Has he not made efforts in time of peace to win over by deception your slave, al-Mundhir, O most mighty king, and cause him to break away from your kingdom? Has he not tried recently to win over Huns who are utterly unknown to him, in order to make trouble for you? Yet a stranger act than this has not been done in the whole of time. [48] For since he perceived, as I think, that the overthrow of the western world would speedily be accomplished, he has already begun to make plans against you in the East, as the Persian power alone has been left for him to grapple with. [49] The peace, therefore, as far as concerns him, has already been broken for you, and he himself has put an end to the Endless Peace. [50] For those break a peace, not who are the first to arms, but who are caught plotting against their neighbors in a time of peace. [51] The crime has been committed by him who attempts it, even though success eludes him. As for the course the war will follow, this is surely clear to everyone. For it is not those who furnish causes for war, but those who defend themselves against those who furnish them, who tend to conquer their enemies. [52] In fact, the contest will not be evenly matched for us even in point of strength. As it happens, the majority of Roman soldiers are at the ends of the earth, and as for the two generals who were the best they had, we come here having slain the one, Sittas, and Belisarios will never again be seen by Justinian. For disregarding his master, he has remained in the West, holding the power of Italy himself. [53] So that when you go against the enemy, no one at all will confront you, and you will have us guiding the army with goodwill, as is natural, and with a thorough knowledge of the country.

[54] When Chosroes heard this he was pleased and, calling together all the noble Persians, he disclosed to them what Vittigis had written and what the Armenians had said, and asked them to consider what should be done. [55] Then many opinions were expressed supporting either side, but finally it was decided that they must make war against the Romans at the beginning of spring. [56] For it was the late *539*
autumn season, in the thirteenth year of the reign of the emperor Justinian. [57] The Romans, however, did not suspect this, nor did they think that the Persians would ever break the so-called Endless Peace, although they heard that Chosroes blamed their emperor for his successes in the West and laid against him the charges that I have just mentioned.

4. At that time also the comet appeared, at first about as long as a tall man but later much larger. Its end was toward the west and its beginning toward the east, and it followed behind the sun itself. [2] For the sun was in Capricorn and the comet was in Sagittarius. Some called it "The Swordfish" because it was long and very sharp at the point, and others called it "The Bearded Star." It was visible for more than forty days. [3] Those who were experts in these matters disagreed utterly among themselves, with one saying that the star foretold one thing while others said that it indicated something else. For my part, I write only what took place and leave to each person to judge by the

late 539 or early 540 outcome as he wishes. [4] A large army of Huns immediately crossed the Danube river and fell upon all of Europe, a thing that had happened many times before but had never brought evils of such number or magnitude to the people of that land.[187] From the Adriatic Sea these barbarians methodically plundered everything as far as the suburbs of Byzantion. [5] They captured thirty-two fortresses in Illyria and took by force the city of Kassandreia (which the ancients had called Potidaia, as far as we know), though they had never fought against walls before. [6] Taking the money and leading away 120,000 captives, they all withdrew homeward without encountering any opposition. [7] In later times too they often came there and inflicted irreparable harm upon the Romans. [8] They also attacked the wall of the Chersonesos, where they overpowered the defenders and, approaching through the surf of the sea, scaled the fortifications by the so-called Black Gulf;[188] thus they got inside the long wall and, falling unexpectedly on the Romans in the Chersonesos, they killed many of them and enslaved almost all the rest. [9] A few of them also crossed the strait between Sestos and Abydos, and, after plundering the Asian side, returned again to the Chersonesos. With the rest of the army and all the booty, they then departed for home. [10] In another invasion, they plundered Illyria and Thessaly and attempted to storm the wall at Thermopylai. As the guards on the walls defended vigorously, they explored for ways around and unexpectedly found the path that leads up the mountain that rises there.[189] [11] In this way they destroyed almost all the Greeks except the Peloponnesians, and then withdrew. [12] The Persians not long afterward broke off the treaty and did harm to the Romans of the East such as I will now recount. [13] Belisarios, after taking down Vittigis, the king of the Goths and Italians, brought him alive to Byzantion.[190] I will now tell how the army of the Persians invaded the land of the Romans.

[14] When the emperor Justinian perceived that Chosroes was eager for war, he wished to offer him some advice and dissuade him from the undertaking. [15] Now it happened that a certain man had come to Byzantion from the city of Daras, Anastasios by name, with a reputation for prudence; it was he who had broken the tyranny that had been established recently in Daras.[191] [16] Justinian therefore sent this Anastasios to Chosroes bearing a letter that he wrote, [17] and the letter said the following:

Justinian to Chosroes It is the mark of men of discretion and of those who practice their religion, when causes of war arise, especially against men who are their true friends, to exert all their power to prevent them; but it belongs to foolish men and those who, in

187. Some historians believe these "Huns" were Bulgars.

188. Modern Saros Bay or Gulf of Saros.

189. Cf. Herodotos, *Histories* 7.216–18. For Justinian and the fortifications of Greece and Thermopylai, see *Buildings* 4.2; *Wars* 8.26.1; *Secret History* 26.31–34 (a garrison provided by the *logothetes* Alexandros in 540, probably after the raid recounted here).

190. 7.1.1–2.

191. 1.26.8.

their lives, make light of religion to devise occasions for war and turmoil that have no real existence. [18] To destroy peace and initiate war is not a difficult matter, as the nature of things is to make the most wicked activities easy for the most dishonorable men. [19] But when they have brought about war according to their intention, to return again to peace is for men, I think, not easy. [20] You charge me with writing letters that were in fact not written with any dark purpose and you are eager to interpret them arbitrarily, not in the sense in which we intended them when we wrote them but in a way that will be of advantage to you in your eagerness to carry out your plans behind a smoke screen. [21] But for us it is possible to point out that your al-Mundhir recently overran our land and performed outrageous deeds in a time of peace, capturing towns, seizing property, massacring and enslaving a great multitude of men, concerning which it is not your part to accuse us but to defend yourself. [22] For the crimes of those who have done wrong are made manifest to their neighbors by their acts, not their thoughts. Even with things as they are, we have still decided to hold to peace, but we hear that in your eagerness to make war upon the Romans you are fabricating accusations that do not bear on us at all. [23] Naturally enough, for those who are eager to preserve the present order of things reject even those accusations against their friends that are most compelling, yet those who dislike the institution of friendship are drawn even to pretexts that do not exist. [24] But this would not be becoming even to ordinary men, much less to kings. [25] Setting these things aside, think on the number of those who will be killed on both sides in a war and who will justly bear the blame for what happens; consider also the oaths you took when you accepted the money and consider that, if you wrongly dishonor them by tricks and sophistries, you would still not be able to avert them, for God is too mighty to be deceived by any man.

[26] When Chosroes saw this message, he gave no immediate answer nor dismissed Anastasios, but compelled him to remain there.

5. When the winter was already reaching its close, and the thirteenth year of the reign of the emperor Justinian was ending, Chosroes, the son of Kavad, invaded the land *May* of the Romans at the beginning of spring with a large army and openly broke the *540* so-called Endless Peace. He did not enter by the country between the rivers, but with the Euphrates on his right. [2] On the other side of the river stands the last Roman fortress, which is called Kirkesion, an extremely strong place, as the Khabur river, a large stream, has its mouth at this point where it joins the Euphrates, and this fortress lies exactly within the angle which is made by the junction of the two rivers. [3] A long second wall outside the fortress cuts off the land between the two rivers and completes the form of a triangle around Kirkesion. [4] Chosroes, therefore, not wishing to make trial of so strong a fortress and intending not to cross the Euphrates river but rather to go against the Syrians and Kilikians, led his army forward without any hesitation. After advancing for what, to an active traveler, is about a three days' journey along the bank of the Euphrates, he came upon the city of Zenobia. Zenobia had built this place in

former times and, as was natural, gave her name to the city. [5] Zenobia was the wife of Odenathos, the ruler of the Saracens there who had been on terms of peace with the Romans since ancient times. [6] This Odenathos rescued the eastern empire for the Romans when it had come under the power of the Medes; but this took place in former times.[192] [7] Chosroes then came near to Zenobia but upon learning that the place was not important and observing that the land was uninhabited and destitute of all good things, he feared that any time he spent there would be wasted on a trivial matter and would distract him from greater undertakings, so he attempted to effect a negotiated surrender. But meeting with no success, he hastened his march forward.

[8] After again completing a journey of equal extent, he reached the city of Soura, which is on the Euphrates river, and stopped by it. [9] There it happened that the horse on which Chosroes was riding neighed and stamped the ground with his foot. The magi considered the meaning of this and concluded that the place would be captured. [10] Chosroes encamped and led his army against the fortifications to attack the circuit-wall. [11] Now it happened that a certain Arsakes, an Armenian by birth, was commander of the soldiers there, and he led the soldiers up to the parapets and, by fighting from there most fiercely, he slew many of the enemy, but was himself struck by an arrow and died. [12] As it was late in the day, the Persians withdrew to their camp to attack the wall again on the following day, but the Romans were in despair as their commander was dead, and were intending to fall on the mercy of Chosroes. [13] On the following day, therefore, they sent the bishop of the city to plead for them and beg that the town be spared. He took with him some of his attendants, bearing fowl, wine, and pure loaves, and came before Chosroes. There he threw himself on the ground and supplicated him with tears to spare a pitiable population and a city that was altogether without honor in the eyes of the Romans, that had never been of any account to the Persians in the past, and that never would be that thereafter. He promised that the people of Soura would give him ransom worthy of themselves and the city in which they inhabited. [14] But Chosroes was angry with them because, being the first of the Romans whom he had met, they had not willingly received him into their city but, daring to raise arms against him, had slain a large number of Persian notables. [15] However, he did not disclose his anger but carefully concealed it behind a placid face, in order to punish the people of Soura and thereby make himself a fearful person in the eyes of the Romans, one not to be resisted. He calculated that in this way those whom he would inevitably encounter would yield to him without trouble. [16] Accordingly, he caused the bishop to rise with great friendliness and, receiving the gifts, gave the impression that he would confer immediately with the notables of the Persians concerning the ransom of the townsmen and would settle their request favorably. [17] Thus he dismissed the bishop and his attendants without any suspicion of the plot and sent with him some men of note

192. Odenathos, the leader of Palmyra, restored the eastern provinces when the defeat of Valerian in 260 had left them open to Persian attack and Roman usurpers. He was nominally acting a deputy for the emperor in Rome Gallienus. After his death (266/267), his wife, Zenobia, created a separatist Palmyrene empire that included Egypt, until she was defeated by Aurelian in 274.

among the Persians, who ostensibly were to be an escort. [18] These men he secretly instructed to go with him as far as the wall, encouraging him and raising his hopes, so that he and all those with him should be seen by those inside rejoicing and fearing nothing. [19] But when the guards had opened the gate and were about to receive them into the city, they were to throw a stone or block of wood between the threshold and the gate and not allow them to shut it; they themselves were to stand in the way of those who might wish to close it, at least for some time, as not long afterward the army would follow them. [20] After giving these instructions to the men, Chosroes prepared the army and commanded them to advance upon the city on the run when he gave the signal. [21] So when the men came close to the fortifications, the Persians embraced the bishop and remained outside, and the people of Soura, seeing that the man was overjoyed and escorted in great honor by the enemy, forgot all their difficulties, opened the gate wide, and received the priest and his following with clapping and many cheers. [22] When all were inside, the guards began to push the gate in order to close it, but the Persians flung down a stone, which they had brought, between it and the threshold. [23] The guards pushed and struggled still more but were unable to get the gate back to the threshold. [24] On the other hand, they dared not open it again, as they perceived that it was held by the enemy. Some say that it was not a stone but a block of wood that the Persians threw into the gateway. [25] When the townsmen had as yet scarcely realized the plot, Chosroes was at hand with his whole army and the barbarians forced back and flung open the gate, which was soon captured by force. [26] Straightway, then, Chosroes, filled with wrath, plundered the houses and killed many of the people; all the remainder he reduced to slavery and, setting fire to the whole city, razed it to the ground. [27] Then he dismissed Anastasios, instructing him to announce to the emperor Justinian in what part of the world he had left Chosroes, the son of Kavad.

[28] Afterward, through motives of humanity or avarice, or to grant a favor to a woman whom he had taken as a captive from the city, a certain Euphemia, Chosroes decided to show some kindness to the people of Soura; for he had conceived for this woman a passionate love (she was extremely beautiful to look upon) and had made her his wedded wife. [29] Accordingly, he sent to Sergioupolis, a city subject to the Romans and named after Sergios, a famous saint,[193] 126 stades distant from the captured city and lying to the south of it in the so-called Barbarian Plain; and he instructed Kandidos, the bishop of the city, to ransom the captives, twelve thousand in number, for two *kentenaria*. [30] But the bishop, alleging that he had no money, flatly refused to take this on. Chosroes therefore requested that he set down in a document an agreement that he would give the money at a later time, and thereby purchase for a small sum such a multitude of slaves. [31] Kandidos did as directed, promising to give the gold within a year and swearing the most dire oaths, specifying the following punishment for himself in case he did not give the money at the time agreed upon, namely that he should pay double the amount and quit

193. Modern Resafa was named in late Roman times after Sergios, a martyr in Diocletian's persecution.

the priesthood as one who had neglected a sworn promise. [32] After setting this down in writing, Kandidos received all the inhabitants of Soura. [33] Few among them survived, as the majority, unable to support the misery that had fallen upon them, succumbed soon afterward. After these negotiations, Chosroes led his army forward.

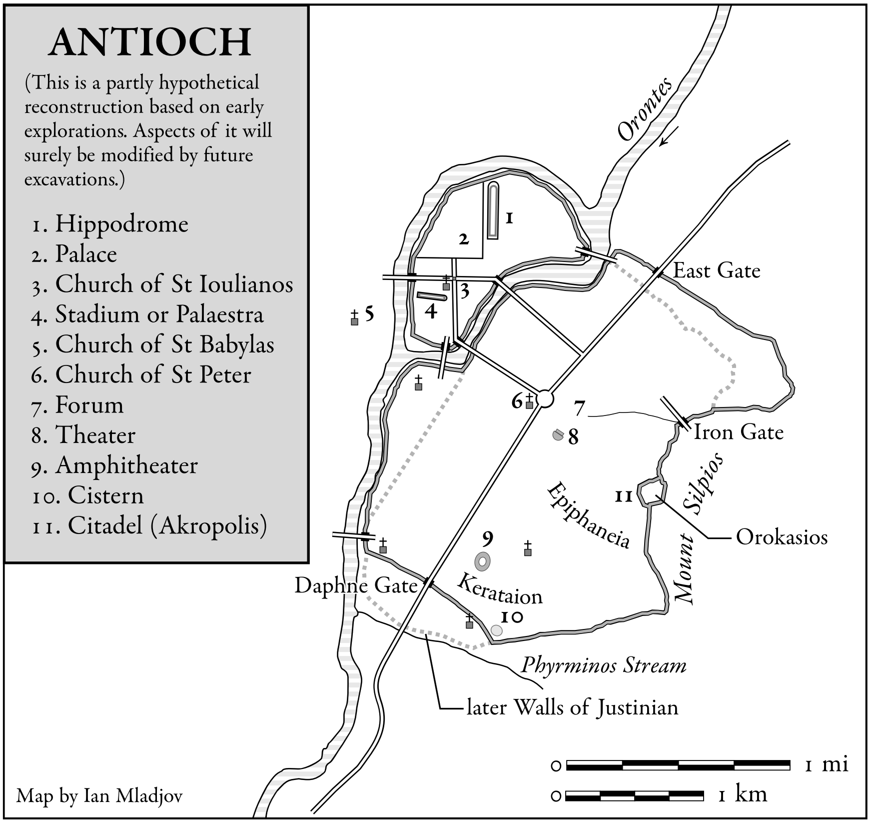
6. It had happened a little before this that the emperor had divided into two parts the military command of the East, leaving the part as far as the Euphrates river under the nominal control of Belisarios, who formerly held command over the whole, while the part from there as far as the Persian boundary he entrusted to Bouzes, instructing him to take charge of the whole command of the East until Belisarios returned from Italy. [2] Thus Bouzes had the entire army with him, and at first remained at Hierapolis. But when he learned what had happened at Soura, he called together the leading men of Hierapolis and spoke as follows:

Bouzes to the people of Hierapolis

> [3] Whenever men are facing a struggle against an aggressor with whom they are evenly matched in strength, it is not at all unreasonable that they should engage in open conflict with the enemy; but for those who are by comparison much inferior to their opponents it is more advantageous to circumvent the enemy by tricks than to array themselves openly against them and so fall into predictable dangers. [4] How great, now, the army of Chosroes is you are surely informed. If, with this army, he wishes to capture us by siege, and if we carry on the fight from the wall, it is probable that our supplies will fail us while the Persians will secure all they need from our land, where there will be no one to oppose them. [5] If the siege is prolonged in this way, I believe that the wall will not withstand the assaults of the enemy, for in many places it is most susceptible to attack, and thus irreparable harm will come to the Romans. [6] But if we guard the city wall with a part of the army while the rest of us occupy the heights about the city, we can make swift raids from there at times upon the camp of the enemy and at times upon those who are sent out for the sake of provisions, and thus compel Chosroes to abandon the siege immediately and make his retreat within a short time; for he will not at all be able to attack the fortifications without fear, nor provision so great an army.

[7] So spoke Bouzes, and in words he seemed to set forth the most advantageous course of action, but he did none of this. He chose out the best part of the Roman army and was off. [8] Where in the world he was neither any of the Romans in Hierapolis, nor the hostile army was able to learn. Such, then, was the course of these events.

[9] The emperor Justinian, learning of the Persian invasion, immediately sent his nephew Germanos with three hundred followers in great disorder, promising him that a large army would soon follow. [10] Upon reaching Antioch, Germanos went around the whole circuit of the wall; the greater part of it he found secure, for the part along the plain is washed by the Orontes river, blocking it off to attackers, while the part on higher ground rises upon steep hills and is quite inaccessible to the enemy. But when he reached the highest point, which the men of that place call Orokasias, he noticed that the wall at that point was very easy to assail. [11] For there happens to be in that



Map of Antioch in Late Antiquity.

place a rock that spreads out to a considerable width and rises to a height only a little less than the fortifications. [12] He therefore commanded that they should either cut off the rock by making a deep ditch along the walls, in case anyone tried to mount from there upon them, or they should build upon it a great tower and connect its structure with the city wall. [13] But to the architects of public buildings it seemed that neither of these things should be done. For, they said, the work would not be completed in a short time with the attack of the enemy so imminent, but if they began this work and did not carry it to completion, they would be doing nothing other than showing the enemy at what point in the wall to make an attack. [14] Germanos, disappointed in his plan, had some hope at first because he expected an army from Byzantion. [15] But when, after considerable time had passed, no army arrived from the emperor nor was expected to arrive, he began to fear that Chosroes, learning that the emperor's nephew was there,[194] might consider it more important than any other thing to capture Antioch

194. Germanos was the nephew of Justin and the cousin of Justinian.

and himself, and for this reason would set everything else aside and come against the city with his whole army. [16] The Antiochenes also had these things in mind and held a council concerning them, at which they decided it was most advisable to offer money to Chosroes and so escape the present danger.

[17] Accordingly they sent Megas, the bishop of Beroia, a man of discretion who happened to be residing among them at that time, to beg for mercy from Chosroes. Sent from there he came upon the Mede army not far from Hierapolis. [18] Coming into the presence of Chosroes, he entreated him to take pity upon men who had committed no offense against him and who were unable to resist the Persian army. [19] For it was least of all proper for a man who was king to trample upon and do violence to those who were retreating before him and were unwilling to resist him. Not one thing that he was then doing was kingly or noble because, without giving the emperor of the Romans any time in which to deliberate whether to make the peace secure in the way that seemed best to both sides, or to prepare for war in accordance with a mutual agreement, as was reasonable, he had recklessly advanced in arms against the Romans, even before their emperor knew what was going on. [20] When Chosroes heard this, he was unable by reason of his ignorance to moderate his stance, but was confirmed in his intention even more than before. [21] He therefore threatened to destroy all the Syrians and Kilikians and, instructing Megas to follow him, led his army to Hierapolis. [22] When he arrived there and established his camp, he saw that the fortifications were strong and learned that the city was well garrisoned with soldiers. He demanded money from the people of Hierapolis, sending to them Paulos as interpreter. [23] This Paulos had been raised in Roman territory and had attended an elementary school in Antioch, and besides he was said to be by birth of Roman origin. [24] But they were extremely fearful for the walls, which embraced a large tract of land as far as the hill that rises there, and besides they wished to spare their land from being plundered. Accordingly they agreed to give two thousand pounds of silver. [25] Then Megas entreated Chosroes on behalf of all the people of the East and would not stop until Chosroes had promised him that he would accept ten *kentenaria* of gold and depart from the whole Roman empire.

7. Thus on that day Megas departed from there toward Antioch, and Chosroes received the ransom and moved toward Beroia. [2] This city lies between Antioch and Hierapolis, at a distance from both of two days' journey for an active traveler. [3] Now while Megas, who traveled with a small company, advanced quickly, the Persian army was accomplishing only half the distance that he covered. [4] So on the fourth day he reached Antioch, while the Persians came to the suburb of Beroia. [5] Chosroes immediately sent Paulos and demanded money of the Beroians, not only as much as he had received from the Hierapolitans but double the amount, as he saw that their wall was very vulnerable in many places. [6] As for the Beroians, they could by no means place confidence in their fortifications, and gladly agreed to give all but, after giving two thousand pounds of silver, they said that they were unable to give the rest. [7] Chosroes pressed them on this account and on the following night all of them

fled for refuge into the fortress that is on the acropolis together with the soldiers who had been stationed there to guard the place. [8] On the following day men were sent to the city by Chosroes to receive the money, but on coming near the fortifications they found all the gates closed and, being unable to discover anyone, they reported the situation to the king. [9] He commanded them to set ladders against the wall and make trial of the ascent, and they did as directed. [10] As no one opposed them, they got inside the fortifications, opened the gates at their leisure, [11] and received into the city the whole army and Chosroes himself. By this time the king was angry and set fire to nearly the whole city. He then went up the acropolis and decided to storm the fortress. [12] The Roman soldiers there valiantly defended themselves and slew some of the enemy, but Chosroes was greatly favored by fortune on account of the folly of the besieged, who had not sought refuge in this fortress by themselves but along with all their horses and other animals, and by this petty concern for property they were placed at a great disadvantage and came into danger. [13] For there was only one spring there and the horses, mules, other animals drank from it when they should not have, and so it came about that the water was exhausted. Such, then, was the situation of the Beroians.

[14] Megas, upon reaching Antioch and announcing the terms he arranged with Chosroes, utterly failed to persuade them to carry them out. [15] For it happened that the emperor Justinian had sent Ioannes, the son of Rouphinos, and Ioulianos, his private secretary, as envoys to Chosroes. The Romans call this office *a secretis*, for secrets they conventionally call *secreta*. [16] These men had reached Antioch and were staying there. Ioulianos, one of the envoys, explicitly forbade everyone from giving money to the enemy or purchasing the cities of the emperor. He also denounced to Germanos the chief priest Ephraimios as being eager to deliver the city over to Chosroes. [17] For this reason Megas returned unsuccessful. But Ephraimios, the bishop of Antioch, fearing the attack of the Persians, went to Kilikia.[195] [18] There too came Germanos not long after, taking with him a few men but leaving most of them behind.

[19] Megas then came in haste to Beroia and, in anguish at what had taken place, he accused Chosroes of having treated the Beroians in an unholy way, for while he had sent him to Antioch to arrange a treaty, he had plundered the property of the citizens, although they had committed no wrong at all, and had forced them to shut themselves up in that fortress; he had then set fire to the city and unjustly razed it to the ground. [20] To this Chosroes replied as follows:

Chosroes to Megas

> My friend, you yourself are responsible for these things, by forcing us to delay here; for you have arrived not at the appointed time, but far too late. [21] As for the strange conduct of your fellow citizens, my good man, why

195. Ephraimios of Amida was a Syriac-speaker who had learned Greek. Before becoming bishop of Antioch (527–545), he had served as *comes Orientis* and had helped Antioch rebuild after the earthquake of 526. As bishop he was a fierce Chalcedonian and wrote treatises (now lost) against Severos of Antioch.

should we discuss it at length? After agreeing to give us a fixed amount of silver in exchange for their own safety, they even now do not think it necessary to fulfill the agreement but, placing such complete confidence in the strength of their position, they are disregarding us absolutely, so we are now compelled to undertake the siege of a fortress, as you see. [22] For my part, I hope that with the help of the gods I will have vengeance upon them shortly, and execute upon the guilty the punishment for the Persians whom I have lost wrongfully before this wall.

[23] That is what Chosroes said, and Megas replied as follows:

Megas to Chosroes

If one were to consider that you are making these charges *as a king* against pitiable and lowly men, he would be compelled to agree with you without a word of protest; for the nature of kings is such that prevailing in arguments is a function of their power in general. [24] But if one is permitted to shake off all else and focus on the truth of the matter, you would have nothing, O king, with which to reproach us justly. Please hear me out gently. [25] As for me, since the time I was sent to declare to the Antiochenes the message that you wanted announced to them, seven days have passed—truly, what could be done faster than that?—and now, coming into your presence, I find these things done by you against my fatherland. [26] But these men, having already lost all that is most valuable, have only one struggle to engage in thereafter, that for their lives; they are now, I think, in a position beyond having to pay the rest of the money to you. [27] For by no device can a man pay a thing that he does not have. [28] The names of things have been long distinguished by men well and suitably, and among these distinctions is that inability is separate from ingratitude. [29] For when the latter, through intemperate manners, leads to resistance, it tends to be detested, as is only natural, but when the former, because of the impossibility of performing a service, is driven to the same point, it deserves to be pitied. [30] Permit this, O king, that, while we receive as our lot all the direst misfortunes, we may take with us this consolation at least, that we are spared a reputation for having been ourselves responsible for the things that have befallen us. [31] As for money, consider that what you have taken is sufficient for you; think that their proper measure is not your rank, but the power of the Beroians. [32] Do not force us beyond that, so that you not seem unable to accomplish your purpose, for excess is always punished by obstacles that cannot be overcome, and the best course is not to attempt the impossible. [33] Let this, now, be my defense on behalf of these men. If I were able to converse with those poor sufferers, I might have something else also to tell you that has now escaped me.

[34] So spoke Megas, and Chosroes allowed him to go into the acropolis. When he had gone there and learned all that had happened concerning the spring, he came again before Chosroes in tears and, lying prone on the ground, insisted that no money at all was left to the Beroians and entreated him to grant only his people's lives. [35] Moved by the tearful entreaties of the man, Chosroes granted his request and, binding himself by an oath, gave pledges to all on the acropolis. [36] Then the Beroians, after coming

into such great danger, left the acropolis free from harm and each went his own way. [37] A few of the soldiers followed them but the majority came as willing deserters to Chosroes, putting forth as their grievance that the public treasury owed them their pay for a long time, and with him they later went into the land of Persia.

8. As Megas said that he had failed to persuade the Antiochenes to bring him the money, Chosroes went with his whole army against them. [2] Some of the Antiochenes therefore picked up and left their city with their money, each one fleeing as he could. And all the rest likewise intended to do the same thing and would have done so had not the commanders of the soldiers in Lebanon, Theoktistos and Molatzes, who arrived in the meantime with six thousand men, buttressed their resolve with hope and prevented their departure. [3] Not long after this the Persian army also came. They all pitched their tents and made camp facing the Orontes river, not far from it. [4] Chosroes sent Paulos up to the fortifications and demanded money from the Antiochenes, saying that for ten *kentenaria* of gold he would depart from there, and it was obvious that he would accept even less than this to withdraw. [5] On that day the ambassadors went before Chosroes and, after speaking at length about the breaking of the peace and hearing much from him, departed. [6] But on the next day the populace of Antioch—they are not serious people but always engaged in disorderly jesting—heaped insults upon Chosroes from the battlements and taunted him with unseemly laughter. [7] When Paulos came near the fortifications and exhorted them to purchase freedom for themselves and the city for a small sum of money, they very nearly killed him with their bows, had he not seen their purpose in time and guarded himself. On account of this Chosroes, boiling with anger, decided to storm the wall.

June 540

[8] So on the following day he led up all the Persians against the wall and commanded different units of the army to make assaults at different points along the river, while he himself with most of the men and best soldiers directed an attack against the summit. For at this place, as I stated above, the circuit-wall was most vulnerable. [9] Thereupon the Romans, as the structure on which they were to stand when fighting was very narrow, devised the following. Binding together long timbers they suspended them between the towers, and in this way they made these spaces much broader so that more men could fight off the assailants from there. [10] So the Persians, pressing most vigorously from all sides, were shooting their arrows thickly everywhere, especially along the crest of the hill. [11] Meanwhile the Romans were fighting back with all their strength, not just the soldiers but also many of the most courageous young men of the populace. [12] But it appeared that those who were attacking the wall there were engaged in a battle on even terms with their enemy. For the rock that was broad and high and, as it were, arrayed against the fortifications caused the fight to be just as if on level ground. [13] If anyone of the Roman army had had the courage to go outside the fortifications with three hundred men and to anticipate the enemy by seizing this rock and warding off assailants from there, never, I believe, would the city have come into any danger from the enemy. [14] The barbarians would have had no point from which to make an assault, for they would

be exposed to missiles from above, both from the rock and from the wall. As it was, however—for it was fated for Antioch to be destroyed by this army of the Medes—this idea occurred to no one. [15] So while the Persians were fighting to the utmost, as Chosroes was present with them and urging them on with mighty cries, giving their opponents no opportunity to look about or guard against the missiles from the bows; and while the Romans were defending themselves more vigorously in great numbers and with much shouting, the ropes with which the beams had been bound together, failing to support the weight, suddenly broke and the timbers together with all those who had taken their stand on them fell to the ground with a mighty crash. [16] When this was heard by other Romans, who were fighting from the adjoining towers, being unable to understand what had happened but supposing that the wall at that point had been destroyed, they beat a hasty retreat. [17] Now many young men of the populace, who in former times used to riot against each other in the hippodrome, came down from the circuit-wall but refused to flee and remained where they were, while the soldiers with Theoktistos and Molatzes immediately leaped upon the horses that were ready there and rode off to the gates, telling the others a tale to the effect that Bouzes had come with an army and they wished to receive them quickly into the city so as to defend it with them against the enemy. [18] Thereupon many of the men of Antioch and all the women with their children made a great rush toward the gates, but as they were crowded by the horses and the area was very narrow, they began to fall down. [19] The soldiers, however, sparing absolutely no one who was in their way, all kept riding over the fallen even more than before, and a great slaughter was done there, especially about the gates themselves but elsewhere too.

[20] The Persians, with no one opposing them now, set ladders against the wall and scaled it with no difficulty. Quickly reaching the battlements, for a time they were by no means willing to descend, but they seemed like men looking about them and at a loss what to do, because, it seems to me, they suspected that the rough ground was set with ambushes by the enemy. [21] For inside the wall, as one goes down from the peak, is an uninhabited tract extending for a great distance and there are found there rocks that rise to a very great height, and steep places. [22] But some say that it was by the will of Chosroes that the Persians hesitated. [23] For when he observed the difficulty of the terrain and saw the soldiers fleeing, he feared that by some necessity they might turn back from their retreat, make trouble for the Persians, and so stand in the way, in that case, of his capturing a city that was ancient, of great importance, and the first of all the cities of the Romans in the East in terms of its wealth, size, population, beauty, and prosperity of every kind. [24] Hence, considering everything else to be secondary, he wanted to give the Roman soldiers every opportunity to flee freely. For this reason too the Persians also made signs to the fugitives with their hands, urging them to flee as quickly as possible. [25] So the Roman soldiers together with their commanders beat a hasty retreat, all of them, through the gate that leads to Daphne, the suburb of Antioch; [26] for from this gate alone the Persians kept away while the others were seized. A few of the populace escaped with the soldiers. [27] When the Persians saw that all the Roman soldiers had moved on, they came down from the peak into the middle of the city. [28] There, however, many of the young men of Antioch engaged in battle with

them, and at first they seemed to have the upper hand in the conflict. Some of them were in heavy armor but the majority were unarmed, using only stones as missiles. [29] Pushing back the enemy they raised the paean, and with shouts proclaimed the emperor Justinian triumphant, as if they had won the victory.

[30] At this point Chosroes, seated in the tower on the peak, summoned the ambassadors, wishing to say something. One of his officers, Zabergan, thinking that he wished to speak with the ambassadors concerning a settlement, came quickly before the king and spoke as follows:

> *Zabergan to Chosroes*
>
> [31] It does not seem to me, Master, that you and the Romans think in the same way concerning the safety of these men. For before fighting they insulted your majesty and, now that they are defeated, dare the impossible and do the Persians irreparable harm, as if fearing that any reason is left in you for showing them compassion. But you want to pity those who do not ask to be saved, and have shown zeal to spare those who by no means wish it. [32] Meanwhile, these men have set an ambush in a captured city and are destroying the victors by setting traps for them, although all their soldiers have long since fled.

[33] When Chosroes heard this, he sent a large number of his best soldiers against them, and these not long afterward returned and announced that nothing untoward had happened. [34] For already the Persians had forced back the Antiochenes by their sheer numbers and routed them, and a great slaughter took place there. The Persians did not spare persons of any age and were slaying all whom they met, old and young alike. [35] At that time they say that the wives of two illustrious Antiochenes went outside the fortifications but, perceiving that they would fall into the hands of the enemy (for they were already plainly seen going about everywhere), went running to the Orontes river and, fearing that the Persians might commit an outrage upon their bodies, they covered their faces with their veils, threw themselves into the river's current, and were lost. So the Antiochenes were visited with every form of misfortune.

9. Then Chosroes spoke to the ambassadors as follows:

> *Chosroes to the Antiochene envoys*
>
> I do not believe that the ancient saying is far from the truth according to which God does not give blessings unmixed, but stirs them with evils and then bestows them upon men.[196] [2] That is why we do not have laughter without tears, but there is always some misfortune attached to our successes and pain to our pleasures, which prevent us from enjoying in its purity such good fortune as is granted.[197] [3] This city, which is of altogether preeminent importance in fact as well as in reputation in the land of the Romans, I have succeeded in capturing with the least exertion, as God has contrived to grant us a victory, as you surely see. [4] But when I behold the massacre of so many people and my trophy drenched with blood, I experience none of the delight that should follow my achievement. [5] For this the wretched Antiochenes are to blame, for when the Persians were storming the wall

196. Achilles in Homer, *Iliad* 24.527–38.

197. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 583c–587a; *Phaedo* 60b–c.

> they were unable to resist and then, when they had already triumphed and had captured the city at the first cry, these men with irrational daring sought to die fighting them in close combat. [6] So while all the notable Persians were pestering me unceasingly with their demand that I should drag the city as with a net and destroy all the captives, I was commanding the fugitives to press on in their retreat, so that they might save themselves as quickly as possible. For to trample upon captives is not holy.

[7] Such bizarre and affected words did Chosroes speak to the ambassadors, but still it did not escape them why he gave the Romans time to flee.

[8] He was the cleverest of all men at speaking untruths, concealing the truth, and blaming his victims for his own crimes; he was also ready to agree to everything and ratify the agreement with an oath, yet much more ready to completely forget what he had just agreed and sworn. For the sake of money he would debase his soul to every act of pollution without any hesitation, a master at feigning piety in his expression and absolving himself with words from responsibility for the act.[198] [9] At Soura, which had done him no wrong and which he captured in the treacherous way explained above,[199] he saw, while the city was being captured, a beautiful woman of high rank who was being dragged by her left hand by one of the barbarians with great violence; and the child, which she had only lately weaned, she was unwilling to let go but was dragging it with her other hand even though it had fallen to the ground, being unable to keep up with the violent pace. Here he displayed his character. [10] For they say that he uttered a pretended groan, putting on an act before all who were present at that time, including the envoy Anastasios, that he was all in tears, and he prayed to God to exact vengeance from the man guilty of these evil deeds. [11] He wanted by this to indicate Justinian, the emperor of the Romans, although he knew perfectly well that he himself was most responsible for everything. [12] Endowed with such a strange nature, Chosroes became king of the Persians—for an evil power had deprived Zamasp of his eye, he who had the first right to the throne based on his age, at any rate after Kavus, whom Kavad hated irrationally—and with no difficulty he prevailed over those who revolted against him,[200] and easily accomplished all the harm that he set out to do against the Romans. [13] For every time Chance wishes to make a man great, she does what she has decided at the right time and no one can stand against the force of her will; she regards neither the man's station nor takes care that things not happen that ought not to; nor does she care that many will blaspheme against her because of these things, mocking scornfully the lucky favors that she has bestowed on a man who has not deserved them; nor does she take into consideration anything else, only to accomplish what she has decided upon. But as for these matters, let them be as God wishes.

[14] Chosroes ordered the army to round up and enslave the surviving people of Antioch and to plunder all the property, while he himself with the ambassadors came from the heights to the sanctuary that they call a "church." [15] There Chosroes found sacred vessels

198. This echoes the portrait of Justinian in the *Secret History*.

199. 2.5.

200. 1.23.

of gold and silver so abundant that, although he took no other part of the booty except them, he still departed with enormous wealth. [16] He took from there many wonderful marbles and ordered them to be deposited outside the fortifications, in order that they might convey these too to Persia. [17] When he had done this, he gave orders to the Persians to burn the whole city. The ambassadors begged him to spare the church alone, for which he had carried away ransom in abundance. [18] He granted this to the ambassadors, but gave orders to burn everything else; then, leaving a few men there who were to burn the city, he himself with all the rest departed to the camp where they had previously set up their tents.

10. A short time before this calamity God displayed a portent to the inhabitants of that city, by which he indicated what was coming. The standards of the soldiers who had of old been stationed there had been standing previously facing the west, but of their own accord they turned and stood toward the east, and then returned again to their former position untouched by anyone. [2] The soldiers showed this to many who were near at hand, including the manager of the camp finances,[201] while the standards were still trembling. This man, Tatianos by name, was an especially discreet person and a native of Mopsouestia. [3] Even so, those who saw this portent did not recognize that power over the place would pass from the western to the eastern king, in order, evidently, that escape might be utterly impossible for those who were bound to suffer those things that came to pass. [4] But I become dizzy as I write about such a great calamity and transmit it to future times to remember, and I cannot understand why it should be the will of God to exalt the fortunes of a man or a place, and then to cast them down and destroy them for no cause that is apparent to us. [5] For it is not right to say that with him all things are not always done with reason, although he then endured to witness Antioch brought down to the ground at the hands of a most unholy man, a city whose beauty and grandeur in every respect could not even so be utterly concealed. [6] After the city had been destroyed, the church was left alone thanks to the activity and foresight of the Persians to whom this work was assigned. [7] Many houses were also left about the so-called Kerataion, not because of the foresight of any man but, as they were situated at the extremity of the city and not connected with any other building, the fire failed to reach them. [8] The barbarians burned also the parts outside the fortifications, except the sanctuary which is dedicated to saint Ioulianos and the houses that stand about this sanctuary.[202] [9] For it happened that the ambassadors had taken up lodgings there. As for the walls, the Persians left them wholly untouched.[203]

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201. I.e., an *actuarius* or *optio*.

202. Saint Ioulianos of Kilikia was a martyr of Diocletian's persecution.

203. According to the *Life of Symeon the Stylite the Younger* 57, the saint was forewarned that God would destroy Antioch, in anger because they worshipped the Tyche of their city. The saint was also offered a detailed vision of the city's capture and subsequent destruction. The saint, from Antioch, practiced his ascetic devotion on a mountain north of the city; he lived from 521 to 592, so his *Life* was written later. Petros Patrikios (Justinian's *magister officiorum*) attributed the fall of Antioch to God's punishment of the good fortune of the Romans (in a speech in Menandros, *History* fr. 6.1.36–40).

[10] A little later the ambassadors again came to Chosroes and spoke as follows:

Roman envoys to Chosroes

If our words were not actually addressed to you in person, O king, we would never have believed that Chosroes, the son of Kavad, had come into the land of the Romans in arms, dishonoring the oaths that were recently sworn by you, which are regarded as the last and most firm guarantee for all things among men in assuring mutual trust and truthfulness; and that you broke the treaty, although hope in treaties is the only thing left to those who are living in insecurity because of the evil deeds of war. [11] One might say of such a state of affairs that it is nothing else than the transformation of the habits of men into those of beasts. [12] For when no treaties at all are made, there remains only war without end, and war without end always denatures those who engage in it. [13] With what intent, moreover, did you write to your brother not long ago that he himself was responsible for breaking the treaty? Did you not thereby admit that breaking treaties is an extremely great evil? [14] If, therefore, he has done no wrong, you are not acting justly now in coming against us; but if it happens that your brother has done any such thing, then let your crime too be committed thus far and no further, so that you may show yourself superior. For he who finishes second when it comes to doing evil things would justly be victorious when it comes to doing good. [15] Yet we know well that the emperor Justinian has never gone against the treaty, and we entreat you not to do the Romans such harm from which there will be no benefit for the Persians. You will gain only this, that you will have wrongfully done deeds of irreparable harm upon those who have recently made peace with you.

[16] So spoke the ambassadors. Upon hearing this, Chosroes insisted that the treaty had been broken by the emperor Justinian and he enumerated the causes of war that the emperor gave him, some of real importance and others lame and fabricated without any foundation. Most of all he wished to prove that the letters written by him to al-Mundhir and the Huns were the chief cause of the war, as I stated above.[204] [17] But as for any Roman who might have invaded the land of Persia or committed military aggression, he was unable to mention any. [18] The ambassadors, however, directed the charges in part not to Justinian but to some of his servants, while in the case of others they objected that what he had said did not take place as stated. [19] Finally Chosroes demanded that the Romans give him a large sum of money, but he warned them not to hope that they could establish peace for all time by giving money at that moment only. [20] For friendship, he said, which is made by men on terms of money is generally spent as fast as the money is used up. [21] It was necessary, therefore, for the Romans to pay a fixed annual sum to the Persians.

Chosroes and the Roman envoys

"For thus," he said, "the Persians will be secure in the peace, guarding the Caspian Gates themselves and no longer feeling resentment at the Romans on account of the city of Daras, in return for which the Persians themselves will be in their pay forever."

204. 2.1.12–13, 2.3.47.

[22] "So," said the ambassadors, "the Persians desire to have the Romans subject and tributary to themselves."

[23] "No," said Chosroes, "rather the Romans will have the Persians as their own soldiers for the future, paying a fixed sum for their services; for you give an annual payment of gold to some of the Huns and to the Saracens, not because you are their tributary subjects but in order that they may guard your land unplundered for all time."

[24] Chosroes and the ambassadors negotiated in this way at length with each other, and at last they came to terms, agreeing that Chosroes should immediately receive from the Romans fifty *kentenaria* and that, receiving a tribute of five more *kentenaria* annually for all time, he should do them no further harm; he was to take with him hostages among the ambassadors as securities for the agreement, and make his departure with the whole army to his native land. There ambassadors sent from the emperor Justinian would arrange the treaty regarding the peace on a firm basis for the future.

11. Then Chosroes went to Seleukeia, a city by the sea, 130 stades distant from Antioch; and there he neither met nor harmed a single Roman, but bathed alone in the sea, sacrificed to the sun and such other divinities as he wished and, calling upon the gods many times, went back. [2] When he came to the camp, he said that he had a desire to see the city of Apameia that was in the vicinity, for no other reason than his curiosity about the place. [3] The ambassadors unwillingly granted this also, but on condition that after seeing the city and taking away with him from there one thousand pounds of silver, he would, without inflicting further injury, march back. [4] But it was evident to the ambassadors and to all others that Chosroes was setting out for Apameia with one purpose only, that by seizing upon some trivial pretext he could plunder both the city and its hinterland. He first went up to Daphne, the suburb of Antioch, [5] where he expressed great wonder at the grove and the water fountains, for both are very well worth seeing. [6] After sacrificing to the nymphs he departed, doing no further damage than burning the sanctuary of the archangel Michael together with certain houses, for the following reason. [7] A Persian noble of high standing in the army of the Persians and well known to king Chosroes, while riding on horseback came in company with some others to a precipitous place near the so-called Treton, where there is a temple of the archangel Michael, the work of Euaris. [8] This man, seeing one of the young men of Antioch on foot and alone hiding there, broke off from the others and pursued him. Now the young man was a butcher, Aeimachos by name.[205] [9] When he was about to be overtaken, he turned about unexpectedly and threw a stone at his pursuer which hit him on the forehead and penetrated to the membrane by the ear. The rider fell to the ground, whereupon the youth drew his

205. "Always-fighter," likely an invention. His exploit seems based on that of David against Goliath.

sword and slew him. [10] Then, at his leisure, he stripped him of his weapons, all his gold, and whatever else he had on his person, and leaping upon the horse rode off. [11] Whether by chance or his knowledge of the country, he eluded the enemy and made good his escape. [12] When Chosroes learned this, he was deeply grieved at what had happened and commanded some of his men to burn the sanctuary of the archangel Michael, which I mentioned. [13] They thought he meant the one at Daphne and burned it with the buildings about it, supposing that the orders of Chosroes had been executed. Such, then, was the course of these events.

[14] Chosroes with his whole army proceeded on the way to Apameia. Now there is a piece of wood one cubit in length in Apameia, a part of the cross on which, as is generally agreed, the Christ in Jerusalem once endured punishment not unwillingly, and which in ancient times had been conveyed there secretly by a man of Syria. [15] The men of old, believing that it would be a great talisman both for themselves and the city, made for it a sort of wooden chest and deposited it in there; and they adorned this chest with much gold and precious stones and entrusted it to three priests who were to guard it in all security. They bring it forth every year and the whole population worship it on one day.[206] [16] At that time the people of Apameia were terrified when they learned that the army of the Medes was coming against them. When they heard that Chosroes was absolutely untruthful, they came to Thomas, the chief priest of the city, and begged him to show them the wood of the cross, in order that they might die after worshipping it one last time. [17] And he did as they requested. Then indeed a sight took place there that is beyond both description and belief. For while the priest was carrying the wood and showing it, above him followed a flame of fire and the part of the roof over him was illuminated with a bright and unusual light. [18] While the priest walked through every part of the temple, the flame continued to advance with him, keeping its place above him in the roof. [19] So the people of Apameia, ecstatic at the miracle, were wondering and rejoicing and weeping, and already all felt confident in their safety. [20] Thomas, after going about the whole temple, laid the wood of the cross in the chest and covered it, and suddenly the light ceased.[207] Then, learning that the army of the enemy had come close to the city, he went in great haste to Chosroes. [21] When the king asked the priest whether it was the will of the citizens of Apameia to resist the army of the Medes from the walls, the priest replied that no such thing had entered their mind. [22] “Therefore,” said Chosroes, “receive me into the city with a few men and with all the gates opened wide.” [23] And the priest said, “I have come

206. According to later Syriac legend (preserved by Agapios of Hierapolis), when Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, discovered the True Cross she sent one piece to Constantinople and another to Apameia. The church in which it was eventually kept is known as the Cathedral of the East. Part of the relic was removed to Constantinople by Justin II, after a contentious dispute with the locals, according to a dubious fragment of Menandros, *History* fr. 17, and a later Syriac tradition.

207. Euagrios, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.26, claims to have been an eyewitness to this miracle, when he was a child of four or five. He says this happened many times on that occasion, not just once.

to invite you to do just that." So the whole army pitched their tents and made camp before the circuit-wall.

[24] Chosroes chose out two hundred leading Persians and entered the city. But when he had got inside the gates, he forgot, willingly enough, what had been agreed upon between himself and the ambassadors, and he commanded the bishop to give not only one thousand pounds of silver nor even ten times that amount, but whatsoever sacred treasures were stored there, being all of gold and silver and of enormous size. [25] I believe that he would not have shrunk from enslaving and plundering the whole city, had some divine force not manifestly prevented him, [26] to such a degree did avarice govern him and the desire for fame twist his mind. [27] For he thought that the enslavement of cities brought great glory upon himself, considering it as absolutely nothing that he was performing such deeds against the Romans in disregard of treaties and truces. [28] This attitude of Chosroes will be revealed by what he undertook to do at the city of Daras during his withdrawal at this time, when he absolutely disregarded his agreements, and also by what he did to the people of Kallinikon a little later and in a time of peace, as will be told by me in the ensuing narrative.[208] But God, as was said, preserved Apameia. [29] Now when Chosroes had seized all the sacred treasures and Thomas saw that he was already drunk on the abundance of the wealth, bringing out the wood of the cross with the chest, he opened the chest, displayed the wood, and said: "O most mighty king, these alone are left to me out of all the treasures. [30] As for this chest, given that it is adorned with gold and precious stones, we do not begrudge your taking and keeping it with the rest, but this wood here, it is our salvation and precious to us, this, I beg and entreat you, leave to me." So spoke the priest. Chosroes yielded and granted the request.[209]

[31] Afterward, desiring popular applause, he commanded that the populace go up to the hippodrome and the charioteers race as usual. [32] He himself went up there also, eager to be a spectator of the games. He had heard long before that the emperor Justinian was extraordinarily fond of the Venetus color, that is, the Blues, and wishing to go against him there also wanted to fix the victory for the Greens. [33] The charioteers began the race from the starting gates, and by some chance the blue driver happened to pass his rival and take the lead. [34] He was followed in the same tracks by the wearer of the green color. [35] Chosroes believed that this had been done purposely and was angry; he called out with a threat that the Caesar had wrongfully passed the others, and he commanded that the horses that were running in front should be held back in order that they might compete in the rear from then on. When this had been done just as he commanded, Chosroes and the green faction were proclaimed victorious. [36] At that time, one of the Apameians came before Chosroes and accused a Persian of entering his house and violating his virgin daughter. [37] Upon hearing this, Chosroes,

208. 2.21.30–33.

209. Euagrios, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.25, preserves a tradition according to which Chosroes asked Thomas if he was pleased to see him there, and Thomas answered "not at all." Chosroes allegedly admired his frank speech.

boiling with anger, commanded that the man be brought to him. When he came before him, he directed that he be impaled in the camp. [38] When the people learned this, they raised a mighty shout, as loud as they could, demanding that the man be spared the king's anger. Chosroes promised that he would release the man to them but secretly impaled him not long afterward. So after he accomplished these things, he left and marched back with the whole army.

12. When he arrived at the city of Chalkis, eighty-four stades distant from the city of Beroia, he again forgot some part of the agreement and, encamping not far from the walls, he sent Paulos to threaten the people of Chalkis, saying that he would take the city by siege unless they purchased their safety by paying ransom and turning over to the Persians all the soldiers who were there, together with their leader. [2] The people of Chalkis were seized with great fear of both kings and swore that, as for soldiers, there were absolutely none of them in the city, although they had hidden Adonachos, the commander of the soldiers, and certain others as well in some small houses, in order that they might not be seen by the enemy. With difficulty they collected two *kentenaria* of gold, as the city they inhabited was not prosperous, and they gave this to Chosroes as the price of their lives and thus saved both the city and themselves. [3] From then on Chosroes did not wish to make the return journey by the road on which he had come, but to cross the Euphrates river and gather by plunder as much money as possible from Mesopotamia. [4] He therefore constructed a bridge at the place called Obbane, which is forty stades distant from the fortress of Barbalissos. He went across himself and gave orders to the whole army to cross as quickly as possible, adding that he would break up the bridge on the third day, and he appointed also the time of the day. [5] When the appointed day had come, it happened that some of the army were left who had not yet crossed, but without the least consideration for them he sent the men to break up the bridge. [6] Those who were left behind returned to their native land as each one could. Then an ambition came over Chosroes to capture the city of Edessa. [7] He was led to this by a saying of the Christians that was like a thorn in his mind, for they claimed that the city could not be taken, for the following reason.

[8] There was a certain Abgar in early times, the *toparches* of Edessa (for thus they called the kings of the various nations at that time).[210] This Abgar was the wisest of all men of his time and as a result of this was a close friend of the emperor Augustus. [9]

210. Abgar V Ukama (r. 4 BC–7 AD, 13–50 AD) was a king of Osroene, a kingdom whose capital was Edessa and which was annexed by the Romans ca. 243. He became famous due to his spurious correspondence with Jesus (see below). But Abgar V is not said to have visited Rome. This was done by Abgar VIII the Great (r. 177–212, sometimes numbered Abgar IX), who was briefly deposed by Septimius Severus in the 190s; he then visited Rome after 204 (Cassius Dio, *History* 79[80].16.2). Prokopios' compound version may also include a reminiscence of Abgar the Great's son Abgar IX Severus, who was deposed and brought to Rome by Caracalla in 212 (Cassius Dio, *History* 77[78].12.1).

Desiring to make a treaty with the Romans, he came to Rome and, when he conversed with Augustus, he so astonished him by the abundance of his wisdom that Augustus wished never to lose his company; for he was an ardent lover of his conversation and, whenever he met him, he was quite unwilling to part from him. [10] He spent a long time, then, in this visit. At one point he desired to return to his native land but was unable to persuade Augustus to let him go, so he devised the following plan. [11] He went out to hunt in the country about Rome, for it happened that he had taken quite an interest in this pastime. Going over a large tract of country, he captured alive many of the animals of that region, and he gathered up and took with him from each part of the country some dirt from the land; thus he returned to Rome with both the dirt and the animals. [12] Then Augustus went up into the hippodrome and sat in his usual place. Abgar came before him and showed him the dirt and the animals, explaining from what district each portion of dirt was and what animals they were. [13] Then he gave orders to put the dirt in different parts of the hippodrome and to gather all the animals into one place and then release them. So the attendants did as he directed. [14] The animals, separating from each other, went each to that portion of dirt that was from the district from which it itself had been taken. [15] And Augustus looked upon the performance carefully for a long time and was amazed that nature makes animals miss their native land untaught. Then Abgar suddenly laying hold upon his knees said: [16] "O Master, what do you think my thoughts are, who have a wife and children and a kingdom, small indeed but in the land of my fathers?" [17] The emperor, overcome and compelled by the truth of his question, granted that he go away, albeit not willingly, and urged him also to ask for whatever he wanted. [18] When Abgar perceived this windfall, he begged of Augustus to build him a hippodrome in the city of Edessa. He granted this too. So Abgar left Rome and came to Edessa. [19] The citizens asked him whether he had come bringing any good thing for them from the emperor Augustus. He answered by saying that he had brought the people of Edessa pain without loss and pleasure without gain, hinting at the fortune of the hippodrome.

[20] At a later time when Abgar was well advanced in years, he was seized with an extremely violent attack of gout. Distressed by the pain and the inability to move that resulted from it, he referred the matter to the physicians, and he gathered all who were skilled in these matters from the entire world. [21] But later he gave up on these men for they failed to discover any cure for his affliction. Finding himself helpless, he lamented his present fate. [22] At that time Jesus, the son of God, was in the body and moving among the men of Palestine. By the fact that he never sinned at all and also by performing impossible things, he showed manifestly that he was truly the son of God. [23] For he called on the dead to rise as if from sleep, opened the eyes of men who had been born blind, cleansed whole bodies of leprosy, healed maimed feet, and cured all other diseases which physicians pronounce incurable. [24] When these things were reported to Abgar by people who traveled from Palestine to Edessa, he took heart and wrote a letter to Jesus, begging him to leave Judaea and the ungrateful people there, and live with him from that time forward. [25] When the Christ saw this message, he wrote

back to Abgar, saying flatly that he would not come, but promising him health in the letter. [26] They say that he added this also, that the city would never be captured by barbarians. This final part of the letter was entirely unknown to those who wrote the history of that time, for they did not mention it anywhere. But the people of Edessa say that they found it with the letter, so that they have even caused the letter to be inscribed in this form on the city gates instead of any other talisman.[211] [27] The city did in fact come under the Medes a short time afterward, not by capture however, but in the following manner. [28] When Abgar received the letter of the Christ, he was soon freed from his suffering, and after living on in health for a long time, he came to his end. But one of his sons who succeeded him on the throne became the most unholy of all men and, besides committing many other wrongs against his subjects, he voluntarily went over to the Persians, fearing the punishment that was to come from the Romans. [29] Long after this the people of Edessa destroyed the barbarian guards who were stationed there and gave the city into the hands of the Romans * * * [212] he is eager to win it over, judging by what has happened in my time, which I will explain in the appropriate place. [30] And the thought once occurred to me that, if the Christ did not write this thing that I have said, still, as men have come to believe in it, he wants to guard the city uncaptured for this reason, that he may never give them any reason for error.[213] As for these things, then, may they be as God wills. So let it be done and so let it be told.

[31] For this reason it seemed then to Chosroes a good idea to capture Edessa.[214] When he came to Batne, a small stronghold of no importance, one day's journey distant from Edessa, he bivouacked there for that night, but at early dawn he was on the march to Edessa with his whole army. [32] But it came about that they lost their way and wandered about, and on the following night bivouacked in the same place; and they say that this happened to them twice. [33] When with difficulty Chosroes reached the area of Edessa, they say that a flux struck his face and his jaw became swollen.[215] Hence he was unwilling to make an attempt on the city but sent Paulos to demand money from the people of Edessa. [34] They said that they had absolutely no fear concerning the city,

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211. The earliest extant source for this correspondence is Eusebios, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13, 2.1.6–8, where indeed it does not mention any promise regarding the city's inviolability (the correspondence had been declared apocryphal in 494 by pope Gelasius; the promise also appears first in the fifth century). The full story of this correspondence involves many elements not in Prokopios, including the mission of the evangelist Thaddaios (Addai) and, later in the sixth century, the tale of the Mandylion, the famous image of Christ imprinted on a towel that he sent to Abgar.

212. Apparently nine manuscript lines are missing here, a highly suspicious lacuna given the context.

213. I.e., to be tempted by heretical or non-Christian ideas because of Christ's failure to honor the alleged promise.

214. Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 58, 61, also says that Kavad's attack on Edessa in 503 was motivated by the desire to refute the promise.

215. The roughly contemporary *Chronicle of Edessa* (105) claims that God protected the city from Chosroes on this occasion.

but in order that he might not damage the country they agreed to give two *kentenaria* of gold. And he took the money and kept the agreement.

13. At that time the emperor Justinian wrote a letter to Chosroes, consenting to carry out the agreement made between him and the ambassadors regarding the peace.[216] [2] When this was received by Chosroes, he released the hostages, prepared for his departure, and wanted to ransom off all the captives from Antioch. [3] When the people of Edessa learned this, they displayed an unheard-of zeal. For there was not a person who did not bring ransom for the captives and deposit it in the temple, each according to his means. [4] There were some who did so in excess of their means. For the courtesans took off all the jewelry that they wore on their bodies and threw it down there, and if any farmer lacked movable goods or silver but had an ass or a sheep, he brought this to the temple with eagerness. [5] So there was collected an extremely great amount of gold, silver, and money in other forms, but not a bit of it was given for ransom. [6] For Bouzes happened to be present there, and he blocked the transaction, eagerly expecting that this would bring him some great gain. Therefore Chosroes moved forward, taking with him all the captives. [7] The people of Karrai also met him and offered large sums of money. But he said it was not appropriate because most of them were not Christians but of the old faith. [8] But when, likewise, the people of Konstantine offered money, he accepted it, although he asserted that the city belonged to him from his fathers. For when Kavad took Amida,[217] he wished to capture Edessa and Konstantine also. [9] But when he came to Edessa he asked the magi whether it would be possible for him to capture the city, pointing out the place to them with his right hand. [10] They said that the city would not be captured by him by any device, because in stretching out his right hand to it he was not thereby giving the sign for its capture or any other bad thing for it, but of its salvation. [11] When Kavad heard this, he was persuaded and led his army on to Konstantine.[218] [12] Upon arriving there, he issued orders to the whole army to encamp for a siege. [13] Now the priest of Konstantine was at that time Baradotos, a just man and especially beloved of God, and his prayers for this reason were always effectual for whatever he wished; even seeing his face one would have immediately surmised that this man was most completely favored by God. [14] This Baradotos came to Kavad bearing wine, dried figs, honey, and loaves of pure white flour, and entreated him not to make an attempt on a city that was of no importance and utterly neglected by the Romans, having neither a garrison of soldiers nor any other defense, but merely the inhabitants, who were pitiable. [15] That is what the priest said. Kavad promised that he would grant him the city freely and he presented him with all the food supplies that had been prepared by him for the army in anticipation of

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216. 2.10.24.

217. See 1.7. Prokopios here refers to Kavad's gradual withdrawal from the empire in 503. The king tried to take Konstantine and then Edessa, though Prokopios has reversed the order.

218. In fact, Kavad negotiated at length with Areobindos over a payment and then attacked Edessa, but failed to succeed either way. A detailed account appears in pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 58–63, who attributes the salvation of the city to the promise made by Christ to Abgar (see *Wars* 2.12).

the siege, an extremely great quantity. Thus he departed from the land of the Romans.[219] For this reason Chosroes claimed that the city belonged to him from his fathers.

summer 540 [16] When he reached Daras, he began a siege. But within the city the Romans and Martinos, their general (for it happened that he was there), prepared to resist. [17] The city is surrounded by two walls: the inner one is of great size and a truly wonderful thing to gaze upon (for each tower reaches to a height of a hundred feet, and the rest of the wall to sixty), while the outer wall is much smaller, but in other respects strong and not to be despised. [18] The space between is no less than fifty feet wide, and in that place the people of Daras are used to placing their cattle and other animals when an enemy attacks them. [19] At first Chosroes made an assault on the fortifications to the west and, forcing back his opponents by a large number of missiles, he set fire to the gates of the small wall. [20] However, none of the barbarians dared to go inside. Next he decided to make a tunnel secretly at the eastern side of the city. For only at this point could the earth be dug, as the other parts of the fortifications were set upon rock by the builders. [21] So the Persians began to dig from the moat. As this was very deep, they were not observed by the enemy nor did they give any sign of what they were up to. [22] So they had already gone under the foundations of the outer wall, were about to reach the space between the two walls, and soon after to pass also the great wall in order to take the city by force. But as the city was not fated to be taken by the Persians, someone from the camp of Chosroes came alone about noon close to the fortifications, whether a man or something else greater than man, and he made it appear to those who saw him that he was collecting the arrows that the Romans had a little before shot from the wall against the barbarians who were attacking them. [23] While doing this and holding his shield before him, he seemed to be bantering with those on the parapet and taunting them with laughter. Then he told them everything and urged them all to be alert and take all possible care for their safety. [24] After revealing these things he was off, while the Romans with much shouting and confusion were ordering men to dig between the two walls. [25] The Persians, on the other hand, not knowing what was happening, were pressing on with their work no less than before. [26] So while the barbarians were making a straight path underground to the wall of the city, the Romans, upon the advice of Theodoros, a man learned in the science called mechanics,[220] were constructing their trench in a crosswise direction and making it of sufficient depth so that when the Persians had reached the middle point between the two circuit-walls they suddenly fell into the trench of the Romans. [27] The Romans killed the first of them, while

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219. According to pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* 58, the Jews planned to deliver the city to Kavad but the plan was revealed by a Roman prisoner of the Persians. The townspeople then began to massacre the Jews, until they were stopped by the *comes* Leontios and the bishop Bar-Hadad (Prokopios' Baradotos). The bishop then persuaded Kavad to leave; the king was in fact running out of supplies, so he could not have given any to Bar-Hadad. That story was probably being circulated by Chosroes in 540.

220. Possibly the same man had been sent by Justinian to Jerusalem in 531 to build the New Church of the Mother of God; Kyrillos of Skythopolis, *Life of Sabas* 73.

those in the rear saved themselves by fleeing at top speed to the camp. The Romans decided not to pursue them in the dark. [28] So Chosroes, failing in this attempt and having no hope that he would take the city by any device thereafter, opened negotiations with the besieged and, carrying away a thousand pounds of silver, departed for the land of Persia. [29] When the emperor Justinian learned this, he was no longer willing to implement the agreement, accusing Chosroes of having attempted to capture the city of Daras during a truce. Such were the fortunes of the Romans during the first invasion of Chosroes; and the summer drew to its close.

14. Chosroes built a city in Assyria at a place one day's journey distant from the city of Ktesiphon. He named it the Antioch of Chosroes and settled there all the captives from Antioch, building for them a bath and a hippodrome and allowed them free access to their other luxuries.[221] [2] For he brought with him charioteers and musicians both from Antioch and the other Roman cities. [3] Besides this, he always provisioned these Antiochenes at public expense more generously than if they were captives, and he required that they be called the king's subjects, so that they were subordinate to none of the magistrates except the king alone. [4] If anyone else who was a Roman in slavery ran away and managed to escape to the Antioch of Chosroes, and if he was called a kinsman by anyone of those who lived there, it was no longer possible for the owner of this captive to take him away, not even if the one who had enslaved the man happened to be a person of note among the Persians.

[5] Thus the portent that had come to the Antiochenes in the reign of Anastasios had this fulfillment for them. For at that time a violent wind suddenly fell upon the suburb of Daphne, and some of the cypresses which were there of extraordinary height were torn up from their roots and fell to the earth, trees that the law absolutely forbade to be cut down. [6] A little later, when Justin was ruling over the Romans, the *May*
place was visited by an extremely violent earthquake that shook down the whole city *526*
and immediately brought to the ground the most and the finest of the buildings.[222]

221. The city was Veh Antioch Khusro ("the Better Antioch of Chosroes"); al-Tarabi, *History* 898 and 959 (pp. 157–58, 254), says that it was built as an exact replica of its namesake on the Orontes, and that it was subsequently known as al-Rūmiyyah ("the Roman"). Yuhannan of Amida, *Ecclesiastical History, Part Three* 6.19, says that its Roman population in the 570s amounted to thirty thousand (including subsequent deportees) and that they formed a plan to escape, but the emperor Tiberios disregarded their plea. Ioannes Lydos, *On the Magistracies* 3.54, says that Chosroes removed statues, marble slabs, and paintings from Antioch; see *Wars* 2.9.16 for the marbles. Chosroes also commissioned a mosaic or painting of his conquest of Antioch for one of his palaces at Ktesiphon, that known as Iwan-e Kisra by the Arabs (and today as the Arch of Ctesiphon). We have a ninth-century *ekphrasis* of this image by the poet al-Buhturi.

222. The earthquake of 526 was followed by widespread fires. A column fell on bishop Euphrasios and killed him; Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 525/526. A detailed account in Malalas, *Chronicle* 17.16–17, gives the figure of 250,000 dead. The city was thereafter renamed Theoupolis ("City of the Cross") to avert future divine anger. There was another, less destructive, earthquake in 528.

It is said that 300,000 Antiochenes perished then. [7] And finally, in this capture, the whole city, as I said, was destroyed. That, then, was the full extent of the Antiochenes' suffering.

[8] Belisarios came to Byzantion from Italy, summoned by the emperor, and after he spent the winter in Byzantion, the emperor sent him as general against Chosroes and the Persians at the beginning of the spring, together with the officers who had come with him from Italy, one of whom, Valerianos, he commanded to lead the armies in Armenia. [9] Martinos, by contrast, had been sent immediately to the east, which is why Chosroes found him at Daras, as I said above.[223] [10] Among the Goths, Vittigis remained in Byzantion, but all the rest marched with Belisarios against Chosroes. [11] At that time one of the envoys of Vittigis, he who had usurped the name of bishop,[224] died in the land of Persia, and the other one remained there. [12] The man who had accompanied them as interpreter departed for the land of the Romans and Ioannes, who was in command of the soldiers in Mesopotamia, arrested him near the boundaries of Konstantine, brought him into the city, and confined him in prison. There the man was questioned and he explained all that had been done. [13] Such, then, was the course of these events. Belisarios and his followers went in haste, as he was eager to anticipate a second invasion by Chosroes into the land of the Romans.

spring 541

15. In the meantime, Chosroes was leading his army against Kolchis, where the Lazoi were calling him in for the following reason. [2] The Lazoi at first inhabited the land of Kolchis as subjects of the Romans, but not to the extent of paying them tribute or obeying their commands in any respect, except that, whenever their king died, the emperor of the Romans would send the insignia of office to his successor on the throne.[225] [3] Together with his subjects, he guarded strictly the boundaries of the land in order that hostile Huns might not advance from the Caucasus mountains, which adjoin their territory, and invade the land of the Romans through Lazike. [4] They kept guard without receiving money or armies from the Romans and without themselves joining the Roman armies, but they were always trading by sea with the Romans who live on the Black Sea. [5] For they themselves have neither salt nor grain nor any other good thing,[226] but by furnishing skins, hides, and slaves they secured the supplies that they needed. [6] But when the events concerning Gourgenes, the king of the Iberians, took place, as was told in the previous book,[227] Roman soldiers began to be quartered among the Lazoi, who

223. 2.13.16. Martinos had also returned with Belisarios from Italy (7.1.1).

224. 2.2.2.

225. The Lazoi were subordinate to the Persians until 522, when they switched to a Roman allegiance and converted to Christianity. The events, and the insignia of royal office bestowed by Justin, are described by Malalas, *Chronicle* 17.9; see *Wars* 2.15.14–16 for this switch of allegiance.

226. The scarcity of salt was noted also by Strabo, *Geography* 11.5.6.

227. 1.12.4–19.

were hated by these barbarians, most of all their general Petros, a man prone to treat others insolently.[228] [7] This Petros was a native of Arzanene, which is beyond the river Nymphios, a district subject to the Persians since ancient times, but while still a child he had been captured and enslaved by the emperor Justin at the time when Justin, after the capture of Amida, was invading the land of the Persians with Keler's army.[229] As his owner showed him great kindness, he attended the school of a grammarian. [8] At first he became Justin's secretary, but when, after the death of Anastasios, Justin took over the empire of the Romans, Petros was made a general, and he degenerated into a love of money, more than anyone else, and treated everyone in a foolish way.

[9] Later the emperor Justinian sent various governors to Lazike, among them Ioannes, whom they called Tzibos,[230] a man of obscure and ignoble descent who had attained high office and had been promoted to general for no reason other than that he was the most greatest villain in the world and most successful in discovering unjust sources of revenue. This man poisoned and destabilized all the relations of the Romans and the Lazoi. [10] He also persuaded the emperor Justinian to build a city by the sea in Lazike, Petra by name;[231] and there he sat as in a citadel and plundered the property of the Lazoi. [11] For he made it no longer possible for the merchants to bring into Kolchis the salt and all other cargoes that were necessary for the Lazoi, nor could they purchase them from elsewhere, but he set up in Petra a so-called "monopoly" and so he became a retail dealer and overseer of the entire trade in these goods, buying everything and selling it to the Kolchians, not at the customary rates but he gouged them as much as possible. [12] At the same time, the barbarians were annoyed by the Roman army quartered upon them, a thing that had not been customary previously. Accordingly, as they were no longer able to endure these things, they decided to go over to the side of the Persians and Chosroes, and immediately sent to them envoys who were to arrange *541* this secretly from the Romans. [13] These men were told to take pledges from Chosroes that he would never give up the Lazoi against their will to the Romans, and on this basis they would bring him with the Persian army into the land.

[14] Accordingly the envoys went to the Persians and, coming secretly before Chosroes, they said:

Lazoi envoys to Chosroes

> If any other people have ever revolted from their own friends in any way and wrongfully joined men utterly unknown to them and, after that, Fortune did them a good turn and brought them back once more with great rejoicing to those who were formerly their own, consider, O greatest king, that the Lazoi are in that position. [15] For the Kolchians had always been allies of the Persians: they rendered them many good services and received the like in turn, and of these there are many records in books, some of which we have while others are

228. For Petros, see 1.12.9–14. He was sent twice as general to Lazike in the years 526–528.

229. 1.8.21–22, in 504.

230. Ioannes Tzibos was Justinian's general in Lazike ca. 535–541.

231. Petra Pia Justiniana is referred to already in *Novel* 28 pr. (18 July 535).

preserved in your palace to the present time. [16] But at a later time it came about that our ancestors, whether neglected by you or for some other reason (for we are unable to ascertain anything certain about this), became allies of the Romans. [17] But now we and the king of Lazike hand over to the Persians both ourselves and our land to treat as you please. [18] We beg you to think in this way concerning us: if, on the one hand, we have suffered nothing outrageous at the hands of the Romans, but are coming to you in bad faith, then immediately reject this plea of ours on the grounds that the Kolchians will never be trustworthy to you also (for when one friendship is dissolved, the way in which a second one with others is formed after it becomes a reproach); [19] but if we have been friends of the Romans in name only but in fact are their loyal slaves and have suffered unholy treatment at the hands of those tyrants, then receive us, your former allies, and acquire as slaves those whom you used to have as friends, and show your hatred of a cruel tyranny that has been erected among us, your neighbors, by acting worthily of that justice which it has always been the tradition of the Persians to defend. [20] For the man who himself does no wrong is not just, unless he also rescues those who are wronged by others, when it is in his power. [21] It is worth telling a few of the things that the accursed Romans have dared to do against us. In the first place, they have left to our king only the form of royal power while they themselves have appropriated the actual authority, and he sits as king in the status of a servant, fearing a general who issues orders. [22] They have imposed a multitude of soldiery upon us, not in order to guard the land against those who harass us (for not one of our neighbors except, indeed, the Romans has disturbed us), but in order to confine us as in a prison and acquire our possessions. [23] In their intention to accelerate the robbery of our goods, behold, O king, what sort of a design they have formed: [24] they compel the Lazoi against their will to buy their own surplus supplies, but those goods produced in Lazike that are most useful to them they demand to "buy," as they put it, from us, and the prices are determined in both cases by the view of the stronger party. [25] Thus they are stripping us of all our gold along with the necessities of life, using the specious name of trade but in fact oppressing us as thoroughly as they possibly can. There has been set over us as governor a swindler who has made our poverty a kind of business through the authority of his office. [26] That is the cause of our revolt, therefore, and it has justice on its side. We will now explain the advantage that you will gain if you receive the request of the Lazoi. [27] To the realm of Persia you will add a most ancient kingdom and, as a result, you will extend the sway of your power. You will have access to the sea of the Romans through our land, and after you have built ships in this sea, O king, you will have easy access to the palace in Byzantion.[232] For there is no obstacle in between. [28] One might add that the annual plundering of the land of the Romans by the neighboring barbarians will be under your control. [29] For surely you too are acquainted with the fact that up till now the land of the Lazoi has been a bulwark against the Caucasus

232. The same point was to be made later in Agathias, *Histories* 2.18.7.

> mountains. [30] So with justice leading the way, and advantage added to it, we believe that not to receive our words with favor would be wholly contrary to good judgment.

That is what the envoys said.

[31] Chosroes, delighted by their words, promised to protect the Lazoi and asked the envoys whether it was possible for him to enter the land of Kolchis with a large army. [32] For he said that he had previously heard many people report that the land was extremely hard to cross even for an unimpeded traveler, as it was extremely rugged and covered extensively by thick forests of wide-spreading trees. [33] But the envoys assured him that the way through the country would be easy for the whole Persian army, if they cut the trees and threw them into the places which were made difficult by precipices. [34] And they promised that they themselves would guide him on the route and would take the lead in this work for the Persians. [35] Encouraged by this suggestion, Chosroes gathered a great army and prepared for the inroad, without disclosing the plan to the Persians except those alone to whom he was accustomed to communicate his secrets, and commanding the envoys to tell no one what was being done. He gave out that he was going into Iberia in order to settle matters there, for a Hunnic tribe, his disinformation claimed, had assailed the Persian domain there.[233]

16. At this time Belisarios had arrived in Mesopotamia and was gathering his army from every quarter, and he was also sending spies into Persia. [2] Wishing to encounter the enemy there himself, if they should again make an incursion into the land of the Romans, he was organizing on the spot and equipping the soldiers, who were for the most part without either arms or armor and in terror of the name of the Persians. [3] Now the spies returned and declared that for the present there would be no invasion by the enemy, for Chosroes was occupied elsewhere with a war against the Huns. [4] And Belisarios, upon learning this, wished to invade the land of the enemy immediately with his whole army. [5] Al-Harith also came to him with a large force of Saracens, and also the emperor wrote a letter instructing him to invade the enemy's country with all speed. [6] He therefore called together all the officers in Daras and spoke as follows: *June 541*

> I know that all of you, my fellow officers, are experienced in many wars, and I have assembled you at this time not to stir up your minds against the enemy by addressing to you any reminder or exhortation—for I think that you need no speech to prompt your daring—but in order that we may deliberate together among ourselves and choose the course that seems fairest and best for the cause of the emperor. [7] For wars tend to be won through careful planning more than by anything else. And it is necessary that those who gather to deliberate should free their minds entirely of modesty and fear. [8] For fear, by paralyzing those who have fallen into it, does not allow reason to choose the best course, and modesty *Belisarios to the Roman officers*

233. At *Secret History* 30.12–16, Prokopios blames Justinian's downsizing of the Roman spy network for the loss of Lazike.

obscures what has been seen to be the better course and leads deliberations in the opposite direction. [9] If, then, you think that our great emperor or I have already decided regarding the present situation, put it out of your mind. [10] As for him, he is altogether distant and left behind by what is being done here, and so is unable to adapt his moves to opportune moments. [11] There is therefore no fear but that in going contrary to him we will do what is in his interests. [12] As for me, given that I am human and have come here from the West after a long absence, it is impossible that some crucial matter has not escaped me. [13] So pay no heed to my opinion; your job is to state outright whatever will be of advantage to ourselves and for the emperor. [14] At first, fellow officers, we came here to prevent the enemy from making any invasion into our land, but now, as things have gone better for us than we had hoped, it is possible for us to debate what to do about *his* land. [15] Now that you have gathered together for this purpose, it is fair, I think, that you state without any concealment what seems to each one best and most advantageous.

[16] That is what Belisarios said. Petros and Bouzes urged him to lead the army with no hesitation into the enemy's country. Their opinion was endorsed immediately by the whole council. [17] But Recithanc and Theoktistos, the commanders of the soldiers in Lebanon, said that, while they too wanted the same as the others concerning the invasion, they feared that if they abandoned the country of Phoenicia and Syria, al-Mundhir would plunder it at his leisure, and that the emperor would be angry at them for not guarding and preserving unplundered the territory under their command, and for this reason they were quite unwilling to join the rest of the army in the invasion. [18] But Belisarios said that the opinion of these two men was not in the least degree true, for it was the time of the summer solstice, when the Saracens always dedicated about two months to their god; during this time they never undertook any inroad into foreign land.[234] [19] Agreeing, then, to release both of them with their men within sixty days, he commanded them also to follow with the rest of the army. So Belisarios was making his preparation for the invasion with great zeal.

17. But Chosroes and the Mede army, after crossing Iberia, reached the territory of Lazike under guidance by the envoys. With no one to prevent them, they began to cut down the trees, which grow thickly in that mountainous region, rising to a great height and spread their branches wide so that they made the country absolutely impassable for the army; and these they threw into the rough places and thereby improved the road and made it easy. [2] When they arrived at the center of Kolchis (this is where the tales of the poets say that the adventure of Medeia and Jason took place), Goubazes, the king of the Lazoi, came and did obeisance to Chosroes, the son of Kavad, as his lord, and put himself together with his palace and all of Lazike into his hands.

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234. Nonnosos, Justinian's ambassador to Ethiopia and Himyar in 530/531, says exactly the same thing about the Arab festival of the summer solstice, that they remain at peace for two months; Photios, *Bibliotheke* cod. 3.

[3] Now there is a coastal city named Petra in Kolchis, by the Black Sea, which had been a place of no importance in former times but which the emperor Justinian had rendered strong and otherwise conspicuous by the circuit-wall and other buildings that he erected. [4] When Chosroes learned that the Roman army was there with Ioannes, he sent an army and a general, Aniabedes, against them in order to capture the place at the first onset. [5] But Ioannes, learning of their approach, gave orders that no one should go outside the fortifications or allow himself to be seen at the parapet by the enemy. He armed the whole army and stationed them near the gates, commanding them to keep quiet and not emit the slightest sound or voice. [6] So the Persians came close to the fortifications and, as they could neither see nor hear the enemy, they thought that the Romans had abandoned the city and left it empty of men. [7] For this reason they closed in still more around the fortifications, to set up ladders immediately, as no one was defending the wall. [8] They still neither saw nor heard anything of the enemy, and sent to Chosroes, explaining the situation. [9] He then sent on the greater part of the army, commanding them to make an attempt upon the fortifications from all sides, and he directed one of the officers to use the engine known as a ram on the gates while he himself, seated on the hill which lies very close to the city, became a spectator of the operations. [10] Then suddenly the Romans opened the gates and unexpectedly fell upon and killed great numbers of the enemy, and especially those stationed with the ram. The rest barely made their escape together with the general and were saved. [11] Chosroes, filled with rage, impaled Aniabedes, as he had been outgeneraled by Ioannes, a merchant and altogether unwarlike man. [12] But some say that it was not Aniabedes who was impaled but the officer commanding the men working the ram. [13] He himself broke camp with the whole army and, coming close to the fortifications of Petra, made camp and began a siege. [14] On the following day he went completely around the walls and, as he suspected that they were not battle-worthy, he decided to storm the wall. Bringing up the whole army there, he set to it, commanding all to shoot their bows against the battlements. [15] The Romans defended themselves with their engines of war and all their bows. At first, then, the Persians did the Romans little harm, although they were shooting their arrows thick and fast, while at the same time they were suffering severely at their hands, as they were being shot at from above. [16] But later on, as it was fated that Petra be captured by Chosroes, Ioannes by some chance was shot in the neck and died, as a result of which the other Romans ceased to care for anything. [17] Then the barbarians withdrew to their camp, for it was already growing dark, but on the following day they devised an excavation against the fortifications, as follows.

[18] The city of Petra is on one side inaccessible because of the sea and on the other because of the sheer cliffs that rise there everywhere; indeed it is from this that the city has received the name it bears.[235] [19] It has only one approach on the level ground, and that not very broad, for extremely high cliffs overhang it on either side. [20] At that

235. *Petra* means "rock" in Greek.

point those who formerly built the city ensured that that part of the wall would not be vulnerable to attack by making long walls that ran along the cliff for a great distance on either side of the approach. [21] They built two towers, one in each of these walls, not in the customary way, but as follows. [22] They refused to allow the space in the middle of the structure to be empty, but constructed the entire towers from the ground up to a great height of very large stones that fitted together, in order that they might never be shaken down by a ram or any other engine. Such, then, are the fortifications of Petra. [23] But the Persians secretly made a tunnel into the earth and got under one of the two towers, and from there carried out many of the stones and in their place put wood, which a little later they burned. [24] And the flame, rising little by little, weakened the integrity of the stones and suddenly shook the whole tower violently and swiftly brought it down to the ground. [25] The Romans who were on the tower perceived what was happening in time so as not to fall with it to the ground, but they fled and got inside the city wall. [26] It was now possible for the enemy to storm the wall from the level and thereby take the city by force with little trouble. [27] The Romans, therefore, in terror, opened negotiations with the barbarians and, receiving from Chosroes pledges concerning their lives and their property, surrendered to him both themselves and the city. Thus Chosroes captured Petra. [28] Finding the rich treasures of Ioannes, he took them for himself, but besides this neither he himself nor anyone else of the Persians touched anything, and the Romans, retaining their own possessions, mingled with the Mede army.

18. Meantime Belisarios and the Roman army, having learned nothing of what was happening there, were going in excellent order from the city of Daras toward Nisibis. [2] When they had reached the midpoint of their journey, Belisarios led the army to the right where there were abundant springs of water and level ground sufficient for all to camp upon. [3] There he gave orders to make a camp at about forty-two stades from the city of Nisibis. [4] All the others were amazed that he did not wish to camp close to the walls, and some were quite unwilling to follow him. [5] Belisarios therefore addressed the officers who were with him as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman officers

It was not my desire to disclose to everyone what I am thinking. For talk spreading through a camp cannot keep secrets, for it advances little by little until it reaches even the enemy. [6] But seeing that the majority of you have fallen into a most disorderly state and each wants to be supreme commander in the war, I will now say among you things about which one ought to keep silent, but I will say this first, that when many in an army follow their own independent judgment it is impossible to get anything necessary done. [7] Now I think that Chosroes, in going against other barbarians, has left his own land without sufficient protection, and in particular this city that is of the first rank and is set as a bulwark of his whole land. [8] In this city I know well that he has stationed soldiers in such number and quality as to be sufficient to stand in the way of our assaults. The proof of this you have near at hand. [9] For he put in command of these men the general Nabedes, who, after Chosroes himself, seems to be first among the Persians in reputation

and every other honor. [10] This man, I believe, will make trial of our strength and will permit us to pass only if he is defeated by us in battle. [11] If, then, the battle is close to the city, the struggle will not be even for us and the Persians. [12] For they, coming out from their stronghold against us, in case of success, if it should so happen, will attack us confidently, for in case of defeat they will easily escape from our attack. [13] We will be able to pursue them only a short distance and from this no harm will come to the city, which you see cannot be captured by storming the wall when soldiers are defending it. [14] If, on the other hand, the enemy engage with us here and we conquer them, I have great hopes, fellow officers, of capturing the city. [15] For while our antagonists are fleeing a long way, we will either mingle with them and rush inside the gates with them, as is likely, or we will overtake them and force them to turn and escape to some other place, thereby rendering Nisibis without its defenders and easy of capture for us.

[16] When Belisarios said this, all the others were convinced and they made camp and remained with him. But Petros, associating with himself Ioannes, who commanded the units in Mesopotamia and had no small part of the army,[236] came up to a position not far removed from the fortifications, about ten stades away, and remained quietly there. [17] Belisarios arrayed the men who were with him as if for combat, and sent word to Petros and his men also to hold themselves in array for battle, until he himself gave the signal. He said that he knew well that the barbarians would attack them about midday, remembering, as they surely would, that while they themselves eat in the late afternoon, the Romans do so about midday.[237] [18] That was Belisarios' advice, but Petros and his men disregarded his commands, and about midday, being distressed by the sun—for the place is extremely dry and hot—they put down their weapons and, without a thought of the enemy, went about in disorderly fashion eating the cucumbers that grew there. [19] When Nabedes saw this, he led the Persian army at full speed against them. [20] The Romans, who did not fail to observe that the Persians were coming out of the fortifications—they were plainly visible moving across a level plain—sent to Belisarios urging him to support them; they themselves took up their weapons and in disorder and confusion faced their foe. [21] Belisarios and his men, even before the messenger had reached them, inferred the attack of the Persians from the dust and went to the rescue on the run. [22] When the Persians closed, the Romans did not withstand their onset and were routed without difficulty; the Persians, following close upon them, killed fifty men, and seized and kept the standard of Petros. [23] They would have slain them all in this pursuit, for they were putting up no resistance, had Belisarios and the army with him not come upon them and prevented it. [24] The first to attack were the Goths, with long spears in close array, and the Persians did not withstand their attack but beat a hasty retreat. [25] The Romans together with the Goths followed them and

236. This was Ioannes Troglita, later to be appointed general in North Africa (4.28.45–52). Corippus spins the ensuing battle into a glorious victory (*Iohannis* 1.56–67).

237. 1.14.34.

slew 150 men. The pursuit was brief, and the others quickly got inside the walls. [26] Then all the Romans withdrew to the camp of Belisarios, and the Persians on the following day set up on a tower, instead of a trophy, the standard of Petros, and hanging sausages from it they taunted the enemy with laughter. However, they no longer dared to come out against them, but guarded the city securely.

19. Belisarios, seeing that Nisibis was extremely strong and having no hope of capturing it, was eager to advance in order to do the enemy some damage by a sudden inroad. [2] So he broke camp and moved forward with the whole army. After marching a day's journey, they came upon a fortress which the Persians call Sisauranon. [3] There were in that place besides the numerous population eight hundred horsemen, the best among the Persians, who were keeping guard under the command of a notable man named Bleschames. [4] The Romans made camp close by the fortress and began a siege but, upon making an assault upon the fortifications, they were beaten back, losing many men in the fight. [5] For the wall happened to be extremely strong and the barbarians defended it fiercely against their assailants. Belisarios therefore called together all the officers and spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman officers

[6] Experience in many wars, fellow officers, has made it possible for us in difficult situations to foresee what will happen, and enables us to avoid disaster by choosing the better course. [7] You know, therefore, how great a mistake it is for an army to proceed into a hostile land when many strongholds and many fighting men in them have been left in the rear. [8] This is what has happened to us in the present case. For if we continue our advance, some of the enemy from here as well as from the city of Nisibis will follow us secretly and will probably harass us in places that are for them conveniently chosen for ambushes or other sorts of attack. [9] And if a second army confronts us and offers battle, it will be necessary for us to array ourselves against both, and we would thus suffer irreparable harm at their hands. In saying this I hardly need to mention that if we fail in the battle, should it so chance, we will after that have absolutely no way to return to Roman territory. [10] Let us not therefore, by irrational eagerness, seem to have become our own despoilers, nor by a love of strife do harm to the Roman cause. For stupid daring leads to destruction, but discreet hesitation always saves those who adhere to it. [11] Let us, then, establish ourselves here and attempt to capture this fortress, while al-Harith with his forces goes into the country of Assyria. [12] For the Saracens are unable to storm a wall by nature, but are the cleverest of all men when it comes to plundering. [13] And some of our soldiers who are good fighters will join them in the invasion so that, if no opposition presents itself to them, they may mangle those who fall in their way, but if any hostile force encounters them, they may be saved easily by retreating to us. [14] After we have captured the fortress, if God wills it, then with the whole army let us cross the Tigris river, without having to fear harm from anyone in our rear and knowing well how matters stand with the Assyrians.

[15] These words of Belisarios seemed to all to have been well spoken, and he immediately implemented his plan. Accordingly he commanded al-Harith with his followers

to advance into Assyria and sent along with them twelve hundred soldiers, most of whom were his spearmen, putting two guardsmen in command of them, Traïanos and Ioannes, who was called the Eater, both capable warriors. [16] He ordered them to obey al-Harith in all that they did, and he commanded al-Harith to pillage all that lay before him and then return to the camp and report how matters stood with the Assyrians regarding military strength. [17] So al-Harith and his men crossed the Tigris river and entered Assyria. [18] There they found a rich land that had long been free from plunder, and undefended besides; and moving rapidly they pillaged many of the places there and secured a great amount of rich plunder. [19] At that time Belisarios captured some of the Persians and learned that those who were inside the fortress were altogether out of provisions. [20] For they do not have the policy that is followed in the cities of Daras and Nisibis, where they deposit the annual food supply in public storehouses. Now that a hostile army had fallen upon them unexpectedly, they had not anticipated the event by carrying in any of the necessities of life. [21] As many people had suddenly taken refuge in the fortress, they were naturally hard-pressed by a scarcity of provisions. [22] When Belisarios learned this, he sent Georgios, a prudent man with whom he shared his secrets, to test the men of the place and see whether he might be able to arrange terms of surrender, and thus take the place. [23] And George, after addressing to them many words of exhortation and kindly overtures, persuaded them to take pledges for their safety and deliver themselves and the fortress to the Romans. [24] Thus Belisarios captured Sisauranon and the inhabitants, all of whom were Christians and of Roman origin, he released unscathed, but the Persians he sent with Bleschames to Byzantion, and razed the circuit-wall of the fortress to the ground. [25] Not long afterward, the emperor sent these Persians and Bleschames to Italy to fight the Goths. Such, then, was the outcome of the events regarding the fortress of Sisauranon.

[26] But al-Harith, fearing that he might be deprived of his booty by the Romans, was no longer to return to the camp. [27] He sent some of his followers ostensibly for the purpose of reconnoitering but secretly commanded them to return as quickly as possible and tell the army that a large hostile force was at the crossing of the river. [28] For this reason, then, he advised Traïanos and Ioannes to return by another route to Roman territory. [29] They did not come again to Belisarios but, keeping the Euphrates river on the right they finally arrived at Theodosioupolis, the one by the Khabur river. [30] Belisarios and the Roman army, learning nothing concerning this force, were disturbed and were filled with fear and an intolerable and exaggerated suspicion. [31] As much time had been consumed by them in this siege, it happened that many of the soldiers came down there with a high fever; for the part of Mesopotamia that is subject to the Persians is extremely dry and hot. [32] The Romans were not accustomed to this, especially those who came from Thrace; as they were now living in a place where the heat was excessive and in stuffy huts in the summer season,[238] they became so ill that the third part of the army were lying half dead. [33] The whole army, therefore, was eager

238. Cf. the expression in Thucydides, *History* 2.52.2.

to depart from there and return as quickly as possible to their own land, and most of all the commanders of the soldiers in Lebanon, Recithanc and Theoktistos, who saw that the time that was sacred to the Saracens had in fact already passed.[239] [34] They went frequently to Belisarios, entreating him to release them immediately and protesting that they had basically given over to al-Mundhir the lands of Lebanon and Syria, and were sitting there for no good reason.

[35] Belisarios therefore called together all the officers and opened a discussion. [36] Ioannes, the son of Niketas, rose first and spoke as follows:

Ioannes, son of Niketas, to the war council

Most excellent Belisarios, I believe that in all of time there has never been a general such as you are in either fortune or valor. [37] This reputation has come to prevail not only among the Romans but also among all barbarians. [38] This good fame, however, you will preserve most securely if you manage to take us back alive to the land of the Romans; for now, indeed, our hopes for that are not bright. I would have you look at the situation of the army in this way. [39] The Saracens and our most efficient soldiers crossed the Tigris river and one day, I know not how long since, they found themselves in such a plight that they have not even managed to send us a messenger. Recithanc and Theoktistos will march away, as you see surely, believing that the army of al-Mundhir is almost at this very moment in Phoenicia, pillaging the whole country there. [40] Among those who are left, the sick are so numerous that those who will care for them and convey them to the land of the Romans are fewer in number than they are by a great deal. [41] Under these circumstances, if we meet a hostile force, whether we remain here or while going back, not a man would be able to carry back word to the Romans in Daras of the calamity that befell us. [42] As for going forward, I consider it impossible even to speak of it. So while there is some hope still left, it will be in our interest to make plans for the return and to put those plans into action. [43] For when men have come into danger, and especially danger such as this, it is stupid for them to ponder not their safety but how to oppose the enemy.

[44] So spoke Ioannes, and all the others expressed approval and, becoming loud and insubordinate, they demanded that the retreat be made with all speed. [45] Accordingly Belisarios laid the sick in the carts and led the army from behind them.[240] [46] As soon as they entered the land of the Romans, he learned everything done by al-Harith but failed to inflict any punishment upon him, for he never came into his sight again. So ended the invasion of the Romans.

[47] After Chosroes had taken Petra, it was announced to him that Belisarios had invaded Persian territory, and the engagement near the city of Nisibis was reported as

239. 2.16.18.

240. At *Secret History* 2.18–25, Prokopios claims that Belisarios did not stray far from the Roman border that year because he was waiting for the arrival of his wife, and that he could have invaded Mesopotamia but did not for personal reasons. Jordanes, *Romana* 377, claims that Belisarios would have defeated the Persians had the deteriorating situation in Italy not required that he return.

well as the capture of the fortress of Sisauranon and all that the army of al-Harith had done after crossing the Tigris river. [48] Straightway, then, he established a garrison in Petra and, with the rest of the army and the Romans who had been captured, he marched back into the land of Persia.[241] [49] Such, then, were the events which took place in the second invasion of Chosroes. And Belisarios went to Byzantion at the summons of the emperor, and passed the winter there.

20. At the opening of spring, Chosroes, the son of Kavad, for the third time began an invasion into the land of the Romans with a large army, keeping the Euphrates river on the right. [2] Now Kandidos, the priest of Sergioupolis, upon learning that the Mede army had come near, began to fear both for himself and the city, as he had not carried out at the appointed time the agreement that he had made with Chosroes.[242] Accordingly he went into the enemy camp and entreated Chosroes not to be angry with him because of this. [3] As for money, he had never had any, and it was for this reason that he had not wanted to ransom the people of Soura in the first place; though he had supplicated the emperor Justinian many times on their behalf, he had not received any help from him. [4] Chosroes put him under guard and, torturing him most cruelly, claimed double the amount of money from him, as had been agreed. [5] Kandidos entreated him to send men to Sergioupolis to take all the sacred vessels of the temple there.[243] [6] When Chosroes did that, Kandidos sent some of his men with them. [7] So the inhabitants of Sergioupolis, receiving into the city the men sent by Chosroes, gave them many of the sacred treasures, claiming that nothing else was left for them. [8] But Chosroes said that these were by no means sufficient for him, and demanded to receive others still more than these. [9] So he sent men, ostensibly to investigate precisely the wealth of the city, but in reality to take over the city. [10] As it was not fated for Sergioupolis to be taken by the Persians, one of the Saracens, who, although a Christian, was serving under al-Mundhir, Ambros by name, came by night along the wall of the city and, reporting the plan to them, urged them not to receive the Persians into the city for any reason. [11] Thus those who were sent by Chosroes returned to him empty-handed and he, boiling with anger, began to make plans to capture the city. [12] He sent an army of six thousand, commanding them to begin a siege and make assaults on the circuit-wall. [13] This army arrived and commenced operations, and the people of Sergioupolis at first defended themselves vigorously but then gave up and, in terror at the danger, were debating whether to give the city over to the enemy. [14] For, as it happened, they had no more than two hundred soldiers. But Ambros, coming again by the fortifications at night, said that the Persians would raise the siege within

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241. At *Secret History* 2.26–37, Prokopios claims that Chosroes was forced to leave Lazike because of a near mutiny by his soldiers, who feared for their homes, which were exposed to Roman attack.

242. 2.5.31.

243. One of these treasures, a gold cross studded with gems, was later returned to the city by Chosroes II in 591 (Theophylaktos Simokattes, *History* 5.13.1–3).

two days as their water had run out. [15] Therefore, they did not by any means open negotiations with the enemy, and the barbarians, suffering with thirst, departed from there and came to Chosroes. However, Chosroes never released Kandidos. [16] For it was necessary, I suppose, that he should be a priest no longer seeing as he had disregarded his sworn agreement. Such, then, was the course of these events.

[17] When Chosroes arrived at the land of Kommagene, which they call Euphratesia, he had no desire to turn to plundering or to capture any stronghold, for he had previously taken everything before him as far as Syria, partly by capture and partly by extorting money, as I set forth in the preceding narrative. [18] His purpose was rather to lead the army straight for Palestine, in order that he might plunder all its treasures and especially those in Jerusalem. For he had it from hearsay that this was an extraordinarily rich land full of wealthy inhabitants. [19] Besides, none of the Romans, whether officers and soldiers, had any intention of confronting the enemy or standing in their way but, manning their strongholds as each one could, they thought it sufficient to preserve them and save themselves.

[20] The emperor Justinian, upon learning of the inroad of the Persians, again sent Belisarios against them. And he came with great speed to Euphratesia as he had no army with him, riding on the state post-horses, which they call *veredi*, while Ioustos, the emperor's nephew, together with Bouzes and certain others, was in Hierapolis where he had fled for refuge. [21] When these men heard that Belisarios was coming and was not far away, they wrote a letter to him, [22] which said the following:

Roman officers to Belisarios

> As you doubtless know, Chosroes has again marched against the Romans, bringing a much larger army than before. Where he intends to go is not yet evident, except that we hear he is very near; he has injured no place but is always moving ahead. [23] But come to us as quickly as possible, if you are able to escape detection by the enemy army, in order that you yourself may be safe for the emperor and help us to guard Hierapolis.

[24] Such was the message of the letter. But Belisarios, not approving what it said, came to the place called Europos, which is on the Euphrates river. [25] From there he sent summons in all directions and began to gather his army, establishing his camp there. He replied to the officers in Hierapolis with the following words:

Belisarios to the Roman officers

> If Chosroes were now moving against any other peoples and not against subjects of the Romans, this plan of yours is well considered and insures the greatest possible security. [26] For it is great folly for those who have the opportunity to remain quiet and be free of trouble to enter into any unnecessary danger. But if, immediately after leaving here, this barbarian is going to fall upon some other territory of the emperor Justinian, and an exceptionally good one at that but lacking a guard of soldiers, be assured that to perish valiantly is better in every way than to be saved without a fight. [27] For this would justly be called not salvation but treason. So come as quickly as possible to Europos, where, after collecting the whole army, I hope to deal with the enemy as God permits.

[28] When the officers saw this message, they took heart and, leaving Ioustos with a few men to guard Hierapolis, all the others with the rest of the army came to Europos.

21. But Chosroes, upon learning that Belisarios with the whole Roman army had encamped at Europos, decided not to continue his advance. He sent one of the royal secretaries, Abandanes by name, a man who enjoyed a great reputation for discretion, to Belisarios in order to ascertain what sort of a general he might be, but ostensibly to protest that the emperor Justinian had not sent the ambassadors to the Persians at all to negotiate the terms for the peace, as had been agreed. When Belisarios learned this, he did as follows. [2] He picked out six thousand men of tall stature and especially fine physique, and set out to hunt at a considerable distance from the camp. Then he commanded Diogenes, the guardsman, and Adolios—he was the son of Akakios and a man of Armenian origin, who had always served the emperor while in the palace as privy counselor (those who hold this honor are called by the Romans *silentiarii*), but at that time he was commanding some Armenians—he ordered them to cross the river with a thousand horsemen and move about the bank there, always making it appear to the enemy that, if the latter wished to cross the Euphrates and proceed to their own land, they would never permit them to do so. And they did as directed.

[3] Now when Belisarios learned that the envoy was close at hand, he pitched a tent of heavy cloth, of the sort commonly called a pavilion, and seated himself there in an otherwise empty space, seeking thus to indicate that he had come without any equipment. And he arranged the soldiers as follows. [4] On either side of the tent were Thracians and Illyrians, with Goths beyond them, and next to them Heruls, and finally Vandals and Moors. Their line extended for a great distance over the plain. [5] For they did not remain standing always in the same position, but separated from one another and kept walking about, looking carelessly and without the least interest upon the envoy of Chosroes. [6] Not one of them had a cloak or any other outer garment to cover the shoulders, but they were sauntering about clad in linen tunics and trousers, and wearing belts. [7] Each one had his horse whip, but for weapons one had a sword, another an ax, yet another an uncovered bow. [8] All gave the impression that they were in a hurry to be off on a hunt, with no other concern in mind. [9] So Abandanes came into the presence of Belisarios and said that the king Chosroes was indignant that the agreement previously made had not been kept, in that the envoys had not been sent to him by the Caesar (for this is what the Persians call the emperor of the Romans); it was for this reason that Chosroes had been forced to come into the land of the Romans in arms. [10] But Belisarios was not terrified by the thought that such a multitude of barbarians were encamped close by, nor was he troubled by these words, but with a laughing, carefree expression he answered, saying:

Belisarios to Abandanes

> This course that Chosroes has followed now is not in keeping with the way men usually act. [11] For other men, if there is some dispute between themselves and any of their neighbors, first carry on negotiations with them and go to war against them only when they do not receive reasonable satisfaction. [12] But he first comes into the midst of the Romans and then offer suggestions concerning peace.

With these words, he dismissed the envoy.

[13] When the latter came to Chosroes, he advised him to depart as quickly as possible. [14] For he said he had met a general who in manliness and wisdom surpassed all other men, and soldiers such as he, at least, had never seen, whose orderly conduct he had admired. He added that the contest was not on an even footing as regards risk for him and for Belisarios, for there was this difference, that if he conquered, he would have conquered the slave of Caesar, but if by any chance he were defeated, he would bring great disgrace upon his kingdom and the Persian race. Moreover, the Romans, if conquered, could easily save themselves in strongholds and in their own land, while if the Persians met with any reverse, not even a messenger would escape to the land of the Persians. [15] Chosroes was convinced by this advice and wished to turn back to his own country, but he found himself in a perplexing situation. [16] For he supposed that the crossing of the river was being guarded by the enemy, and he was unable to march back by the same road, which was entirely devoid of human habitation, for the supplies that they had with them when they first invaded the land of the Romans were entirely consumed. [17] At last, after long consideration, it seemed to him most advantageous to risk a battle and get to the opposite side, and then to make the journey through a land abounding in all good things. [18] Now Belisarios knew well that not even a hundred thousand men would suffice to block the crossing of Chosroes. For the river at many places along there can be crossed in boats very easily, and apart from this the Persian army was too strong to be prevented from crossing by a numerically insignificant enemy. He had at first commanded the soldiers of Diogenes and Adolios, together with the thousand horsemen, to move about the bank at that point in order to confuse and perplex the barbarian. [19] Having frightened him, as I said, Belisarios now feared that some obstacle might arise to prevent his departure from the land of the Romans. [20] For it seemed to him a significant achievement just to drive away from there the army of Chosroes, without risking battle against so many myriads of barbarians with soldiers who were very few in number and in abject terror of the Mede army. For this reason he commanded Diogenes and Adolios to remain inactive.

[21] Chosroes, accordingly, constructed a bridge with great speed and crossed the Euphrates river suddenly with his whole army. [22] For the Persians are able to cross all rivers without the slightest difficulty because when they are on the march they have in their gear iron hooks with which they fasten together long timbers and use them to improvise bridges on the spur of the moment, wherever they so desire. [23] As soon as he had reached the land on the opposite side, he sent to Belisarios and said that he, for his part, had done a favor to the Romans by withdrawing the Mede army, and that he was expecting envoys from them, who ought to present themselves to him soon. [24] Then Belisarios too with the whole Roman army crossed the Euphrates river and immediately sent to Chosroes. [25] When these envoys came into his presence, they commended him highly for his withdrawal and promised that envoys would come to him promptly from the emperor, who would ratify with him the terms that had previously been agreed upon concerning the peace. [26] And they asked that he treat the Romans as his friends

on his journey through their land. This too he agreed to do, if they would but give him one of their notable men as a hostage to make this compact binding, as a condition for them to carry out their agreement. [27] The envoys returned to Belisarios and reported the words of Chosroes, and he came to Edessa and chose Ioannes, the son of Basileios, the most illustrious of all the people of Edessa in birth and wealth, and immediately sent him, against his will, as a hostage to Chosroes.[244] [28] The Romans praised Belisarios and he seemed to have achieved greater glory in their eyes by this feat than when he brought Gelimer or Vittigis captive to Byzantion. [29] In truth, it was an achievement of great importance and deserving great praise that, at a time when all the Romans were in terror and hiding behind their defenses, and Chosroes with a large army had entered into the midst of the Roman empire, a general with only a few men, coming in hot haste from Byzantion at just that moment, should set his camp over against that of the king of the Persians, and that Chosroes unexpectedly, through fear of either chance or the valor of the man, or even because he was deceived by tricks, should no longer continue his advance but take to flight, although pretending to be seeking peace.

[30] But in the meantime Chosroes, disregarding the agreement, took the city of Kallinikon, which was entirely without defenders. For the Romans, seeing that the wall of this city was altogether unsound and easy of capture, were always tearing down some part of it and restoring it with new construction. [31] Just at that time they had torn down one section of it but had not yet built in the gap.[245] So when they learned that the enemy were close at hand, they carried out the most precious of their treasures, and the wealthy inhabitants withdrew to other strongholds, while the rest without soldiers remained where they were. [32] And it happened that a great number of farmers had gathered there. Chosroes enslaved them and razed everything to the ground.[246] [33] A little later, upon receiving the hostage Ioannes, he withdrew to his own country. [34] The Armenians who had submitted to Chosroes received pledges from the Romans and came with Vasak to Byzantion.[247] Such was the fortune of the Romans in the third invasion of Chosroes. Belisarios came to Byzantion at the summons of the emperor,[248] in order to be sent again to Italy, as the situation there was already full of difficulties for the Romans.

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244. According to the *Secret History* 12.6–10, Ioannes' grandmother later tried to ransom him from the Persians when Chosroes claimed that the agreement had been broken, but Justinian forbade it; he later found a way to confiscate the ransom money she had collected.

245. For the rebuilding of the walls, see *Buildings* 2.7.17.

246. At *Secret History* 3.30–31, Prokopios claims that Belisarios was criticized for not responding to this provocation.

247. 2.3.29–31.

248. At *Secret History* 4.1–36, Prokopios reveals that Belisarios was summoned back by Theodora, at the end of 542, because he had been accused of declaring that he would refuse to accept the court's choice of successor in case Justinian died of the plague; he was stripped of influence and followers and humiliated before being sent to Italy in 542. This version is largely confirmed by the Anonymous Continuer of Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 544/545.

22. During those times there was a plague that came close to wiping out the whole of mankind.[249] Now for all the calamities that fall upon us from the heavens it might be possible for some bold man to venture a theory regarding their causes, like the many marvelous theories about causes that the experts in these fields tend to dream up which are, in reality, utterly incomprehensible to mankind. Still, they make up outlandish theories of natural science, knowing well that they are saying nothing sound and they are content with themselves if only they manage to deceive a few people whom they meet into accepting their argument. [2] But about this calamity there is no way to find any justification, to give a rational account, or even to cope with it mentally, except by referring it to God. [3] For it did not afflict a specific part of the earth only or one group of people, nor did it strike during one season of the year, based on which facts it might have been possible to contrive some subtle explanation regarding its cause; instead, it embraced the entire earth and wrecked the lives of all people, even when those lives were as different from each other in quality as can be imagined, nor did it respect either sex or age. [4] For people differ from each other in the places that they live, the customs that govern their lifestyle, the manner of their personality, their professions, and many other ways, but none of these factors made the slightest difference when it came to this disease—and to this disease alone. [5] It struck some during the summer, others during the winter, and the rest during the other seasons. So each person should state his own opinion about how he understands all this, and so too should our subtle theorists and astrologers, but I, for my part, will now state where this disease originated and how it destroyed people.

[6] It originated among the Egyptians who live in Pelousion.[250] From there it branched out in two directions, the first moving against Alexandria and then to the rest of Egypt, the second coming to the Palestinians who live by the border of Egypt. From here it spread to the entirety of the world, always moving along and advancing at set intervals. [7] For it seemed to move as if by prearranged plan: it would linger for a set time in each place, just enough to make sure that no person could brush it off as a slight matter, and from there it would disperse in different directions as far as the ends of the inhabited world, almost as if it feared that any hidden corner of the earth might escape it. [8] It overlooked no island or cave or mountain peak where people happened to live, and if it passed through a region upon whose inhabitants it did not lay its hands or whom it did not affect in some way, it would return to that place at a later time: those whom it had previously ravaged it now left alone, but it did not let up from that place

249. This was the so-called Justinianic plague, caused probably by *Yersinia pestis*. It would strike at intervals for the next two hundred years. Historians still debate its demographic impact. The chief Roman sources are Corippus, *Iohannis* 3.343–400; Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.92; Yuhannan of Amida in Dionysios of Tel-Mahre, *Chronicle, Part III* 74–98; and Euagrios, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.29. Prokopios' account is closely modeled on that of Thucydides, *History* 2.47–54 (430–429 BC), but not to the point of undermining its reliability.

250. Most scholars believe it originated in central Africa, but a minority supports a south Asian origin.

before it had exacted the proper and just toll in dead people, the very death toll that the inhabitants of the surrounding areas had paid earlier. [9] This disease always spread out from the coasts and worked its way up into the interior. It arrived at Byzantion in the middle of the spring of its second year, where I happened to be at the time. And it struck as follows. *spring 542*

[10] Visions of demons taking every imaginable human form were seen by many people, and those who encountered them believed that they were being struck on some part of their body by that man whom they met; the disease set in at the very moment when they saw this vision. [11] At first, those who met these creatures would try to turn them away by invoking the most holy names and otherwise exorcising them in whatever way each knew how, but it was all perfectly futile, for even in the churches where most people sought refuge they were perishing constantly. [12] Later they would not bother to notice even when their friends were calling out to them, but instead they shut themselves up in their rooms and pretended not to hear, even while the others were pounding on their doors; this was, of course, because they feared that the caller was one of those demons. [13] But others were not affected in this way by the plague; instead, they saw a *dream* vision in which they suffered the same thing at the hands of the entity standing over them, or else they heard a voice predicting to them that their names would be placed on the lists of those who were about to die. [14] Most people, however, were taken ill without the advance warning of a waking vision or a dream. [15] They fell ill in the following way. Suddenly they became feverish, some of them when they rose from sleep, others while they were walking about, and still others while they were doing any odd thing. [16] The body did not change its color or become warm as during a regular fever, nor did it burn up; rather, the fever was so feeble from its beginning all the way to the evening that it gave no cause for worry either to the victims themselves or to their doctors who touched them. [17] In fact, no one who fell ill in this way believed that he would die from it. But then on the same day for some people, or on the next for others, at any rate no more than a few days later, a bubonic swelling appeared. This happened not only in that part of the body, below the abdomen, which is called the *boubon*, but also inside the armpit, in some cases by the ears, while in others at various points on the thigh.

[18] Up to this point the symptoms of the disease were more or less the same for everyone who contracted it. But as for what followed, I am not able to say whether the variation in its progression was due to the differences in bodies or because it followed the will of him who introduced the disease into the world. [19] While some fell into a deep coma, others developed acute dementia, but both felt the fundamental effects of the disease. Those who became comatose forgot all about their loved ones and seemed to be always asleep. [20] If someone cared for them, they ate in the meantime, but those who were abandoned died of starvation. [21] Those gripped by the madness of dementia, on the other hand, could not sleep and became delusional. Imagining that people were attacking them in order to kill them, they became hysterical and fled at a run, shouting loudly. [22] So those who were caring for their needs were driven to

exhaustion and constantly faced unheard-of difficulties. [23] For this reason everyone pitied the latter no less than their patients, not because they were at all affected by the disease through proximity—for no doctor or layman contracted this misfortune by touching any of the sick or the dead, given that many who were constantly burying the dead or caring for the sick, even those unrelated to them, continued to perform this service against all expectation, whereas many who contracted the disease from an unknown source died directly—rather, they pitied them because they had to endure a great hardship. [24] For their patients kept falling out of bed and rolling around on the floor, and they would have to put them back; and then they would long to rush out of their houses, and they would have to force them back by pushing and pulling them. [25] If any came near to water, they wanted to throw themselves in, but not because they needed to drink (for most rushed into the sea); rather, the cause was mostly the mental illness. [26] Food also caused them much pain, as it was not easy for them to eat. Many died because they had no one to look after them, were done in by hunger, or threw themselves from a height. [27] Those who did not became delirious or comatose died unable to endure the pain brought on by the mortification of the bubos. [28] Now one might deduce that the same thing happened to the others too but, as they were utterly beside themselves, they were unable to sense the pain; the illness of their minds took all sensation away. [29] Some doctors were at a loss because the symptoms were unfamiliar to them and, believing that the focus of the disease was to be found in the bubos, decided to investigate the bodies of the dead. Cutting into some of the bubos, they found that a kind of malignant carbuncle had developed inside.

[30] Some died immediately, others after many days. In some cases, the body blossomed with dark pustules about the size of a lentil. These people did not survive a single day; they all died immediately. [31] Many others suddenly began to vomit blood and perished immediately. [32] I have this to state too, that the most eminent doctors predicted that many would die who shortly afterward were unexpectedly freed of all their maladies, and they also claimed that many would survive who were destined to perish almost immediately. [33] Thus there was no cause behind this disease that any human reason could grasp, for in all cases the outcome made little sense. Some were saved by taking baths, others were no less harmed by it. [34] Many who were neglected died but many others paradoxically survived. Likewise, the same treatment produced different results in different patients. In sum, no method of survival could be found by man, whether to guard himself that he not be exposed to the disease at all or to survive that misfortune once he had contracted it; for its onset was inexplicable while survival from it was not under anyone's control. [35] As for women who were pregnant, death could be foreseen if they were taken ill with the disease. Some had miscarriages and died while others perished in labor along with the infants they bore. [36] It is said, however, that three new mothers survived while their infants did not, and that one died in childbirth though her child was born and survived. [37] In cases where the bubos grew very large and discharged pus, the patients overcame the disease and survived, as it was clear that for them the eruption of the carbuncle found relief in this way; for the most part, this

was a sign of health. But in cases where the bubos remained in the same condition, these patients had to endure all the misfortunes that I just described. [38] It happened for some that the thigh would become withered and because of this the bubo would grow large but not discharge pus. [39] In the case of others who happened to survive, their speech was not unaffected, and they lived afterward with a lisp or barely able to articulate some indistinct words.

23. The disease lasted four months while it ran its course in Byzantion but it was at its peak for three. [2] At first only a few people died above the usual death rate but then the mortality rose higher until the toll in deaths reached five thousand a day, and after that it reached ten thousand, and then even more. [3] In the beginning each would arrange in person for the burial of the dead from his own household, whom they would even throw into the graves of others either by stealth or using violence. But then confusion began to reign everywhere and in all ways. [4] Slaves were deprived of their masters; men who were previously prosperous now suffered the loss of their servants who were either sick or dead; and many households were emptied of people altogether. [5] Thus it happened that some notables were left unburied for many days because there was no help to be had.

So the responsibility of handling this situation fell, as was natural, upon the emperor. [6] He posted soldiers from the palace and made funds available, appointing Theodoros to supervise this task; this was the man in charge of imperial responses, that is, his job was to convey to the emperor all the petitions of suppliants and then inform them of his decisions. In the Latin tongue the Romans call this office a *referendarius*. [7] So those whose households had not fallen so low as to be entirely deserted provided in person for the burial of their own relatives. [8] Meanwhile, Theodoros was burying the dead that had been abandoned by giving the emperor's money and spending his own as well. [9] And when the existing graves were full of dead bodies, at first they dug up all the open sites in the city, one after another, placed the dead in there, each person as he could, and departed. But later those who were digging these ditches could no longer keep up with the number of those dying, so they climbed up the towers of the fortified enclosure, the one in Sykai,[251] [10] tore off the roofs, and tossed the bodies there in a tangled heap. Piling them up in this way, just as each happened to fall, they filled up virtually all the towers; and then they covered them again with their roofs. [11] A foul stench would waft from there to the city and bring even more grief to its people, especially if the wind was blowing from that direction.

[12] All the customs of burial were overlooked at that time. For the dead were neither escorted by a procession in the customary way nor were they accompanied by chanting, as was usual; rather, it was enough if a person carried one of the dead on his shoulders to a place where the city met the sea and throw him down; and there they were thrown into barges in a pile and taken to who knows where. [13] At that time also those elements of the populace who had formerly been militants in the circus fan-clubs set aside their mutual hatred and together attended to the funeral rites of the dead, carrying in person

251. Across the Golden Horn, at the site of future Galatas.

and burying the bodies of those who did not belong to their color. [14] Even more, those who previously used to delight in the shameful and wicked practices in which they indulged, well, these people gave up the immorality of their lifestyles and became religious to an extreme degree. However, this was not because they really understood what it means to be wise nor because they had suddenly become lovers of virtue. [15] For it is impossible for a person to so quickly change what nature has implanted in him or the habits he has acquired over a long period of time—unless, of course, some divine goodness touches him. For the time being, however, almost everyone was so astounded by what was happening, and believed that they were likely to die immediately, that they temporarily came to their senses out of pure necessity, as could only be expected. [16] In fact, as soon as they overcame the disease and were saved, thinking that they were now in the clear given that the evil had moved on to some other people, they completely reversed course again in their character and became even worse than they had been before, making a spectacle of the inconsistency in their behavior; their malice and immorality now quite overpowered their better selves. One would not, therefore, utter a falsehood if he were to assert that this disease, whether by some chance or providence, carefully picked out the worst people and let them live. But these things were understood only afterward.

[17] It was not easy in those times to see anyone out and about in Byzantion, for all were holed up in their homes. Those who happened to be healthy of body were either tending to the sick or mourning for the dead. [18] If you happened to chance upon someone going out, he was carrying one of the dead. All work came to a standstill and the craftsmen set aside all their trades as did anyone who had some project at hand. [19] And a true famine was careering about in a city that nevertheless abounded in all goods. It seemed difficult to find enough bread or an adequate supply of anything else; such a thing was, in fact, worthy of mention. Therefore it seemed that some of the sick too lost their lives before their time because they lacked the necessary sustenance. [20] The whole experience may be summed up by saying that it was altogether impossible to see anyone in Byzantion wearing the chlamys,[252] especially when the emperor himself fell sick (he too developed a bubo).[253] In a city holding dominion over the entire Roman empire, everyone was wearing civilian clothes and privately minding his own business. [21] That was how the plague affected Byzantion and the other Roman lands. It spread also to the Persian lands as well as to all the other barbarians.

late 542 **24.** Now it happened that Chosroes had come from Assyria to a place toward the north called Adarbiganon,[254] from which he was planning to make an invasion into the

252. Public officials in the later Roman empire wore colorful garments embroidered with the insignia and standards of their office.

253. See *Secret History* 4.1 for the emperor's illness. Rumors of his death caused Belisarios and Bouzes to discuss the possible succession, and for this they were recalled and punished by Theodora.

254. Persian Adurbadagan, derived from Media Atropatene, southwest of the Caspian Sea.

Roman empire through Persarmenia. [2] In that place is the great sanctuary of fire,[255] which the Persians revere above all other gods. There the fire is guarded unquenched by the magi, and they perform carefully a number of rites, and in particular they consult an oracle on the most important matters. This is the fire which the Romans worshipped under the name of Hestia in ancient times.[256] [3] There someone who had been sent from Byzantion to Chosroes announced that Konstantianos and Sergios would come before him soon as envoys to arrange the treaty. [4] Now these two men were both trained speakers and extremely clever. Konstantianos was an Illyrian by birth and Sergios was from the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia. [5] Chosroes remained quiet expecting these men. But in the course of the journey there Konstantianos became ill and much time was wasted; in the meantime, it came about that the plague came to the Persians. [6] Therefore Nabedes, who at that time held the office of general in Persarmenia, was instructed by the king to send the priest of the Christians in Dvin[257] to Valerianos, the general in Armenia, in order to reproach the envoys for their delay and to urge the Romans with all zeal toward peace. [7] That man came with his brother to Armenia and, meeting Valerianos, declared that he himself as a Christian was favorably disposed toward the Romans and that king Chosroes always followed his advice in every matter; so that if the ambassadors came with him to the land of Persia there would be nothing to prevent them from arranging the peace as they wished. [8] That is what the priest said, but the brother of the priest met Valerianos secretly and said that Chosroes was facing great difficulties, as his son had risen against him in rebellion and he himself together with the whole Persian army had been taken with the plague;[258] this was the reason why he wished just now to settle an agreement with the Romans. [9] When Valerianos heard this, he immediately dismissed the bishop, promising that the envoys would soon come to Chosroes, but he passed on the words he had heard to the emperor Justinian. [10] This led the emperor immediately to send word to him and Martinos and the other commanders to invade the enemy's territory as quickly as possible. For he knew well that no enemy would stand in their way. [11] He commanded them to gather in one place and then make their invasion into Persarmenia. When the commanders received these letters, all of them together with their followers began to pour into the lands of Armenia.

[12] Chosroes had abandoned Adarbiganon a little before through fear of the plague and was off with his whole army into Assyria, where the plague's effects had not yet become epidemic. Valerianos accordingly encamped near Theodosioupolis with the army units under him, and with him was Narses, accompanied by the Armenians and

255. Adur Gushnasp, one of the three great Zoroastrian fire temples (the one sacred to warriors, and thus to the kings), at the site known as Takht-e Soleyman after the Arab conquest.

256. I.e., Vesta.

257. This was the *katholikos* of the Armenian Church (non-Chalcedonian), headquartered at Dvin between 452 and 927 AD (see 2.25.4).

258. This rebellion by a son of Chosroes is otherwise unattested. Prokopios recounts another at 8.10.8–22 (550 AD).

some of the Heruls. [13] Martinos, the general of the East, together with Hildiger and Theoktistos, reached the fortress of Kitharizon and, fixing his camp, remained there. This fortress is separated from Theodosioupolis by a journey of four days. There too Petros came not long after with Adolios and some other commanders. [14] The soldiers in this region were commanded by Isaakes, the brother of Narses. Filimuth and Beros with the Heruls who were with them went into the territory of Chorzianene, not far from the camp of Martinos. [15] Ioustos, the emperor's nephew, Peranios, and Ioannes, the son of Niketas, together with Domentiolos and Ioannes who was called the Eater, encamped near the fortress called Phison, which is close by the boundaries of Martyropolis. [16] Thus, then, were encamped the Roman commanders with their followers, and the whole army amounted to thirty thousand men. [17] Now all these soldiers were neither gathered in one place nor was there any meeting to discuss their plans. But the generals sent to each other some of their followers and began to inquire about an invasion. [18] Suddenly, however, Petros, without telling anyone and without careful consideration, invaded the enemy land with his men. When on the next day this was found out by Filimuth and Beros, the leaders of the Heruls, they immediately followed suit. [19] And when this in turn was learned by the men with Martinos and Valerianos, they quickly joined in the invasion. [20] All of them a little later united with each other in the enemy's territory, with the exception of Ioustos and his men, who, as I said, had encamped far from the rest of the army and learned later of their invasion; then, indeed, they too invaded the territory of the enemy as quickly as possible at the point where they were, but failed to unite with the other commanders. [21] As for the others, they proceeded in a body straight for Dvin, neither plundering nor damaging in any other way the land of the Persians.

25. Now Dvin is a land excellent in every respect, always healthy with respect to its airs and waters; from Theodosioupolis it is distant a journey of eight days. There are plains suitable for riding, [2] many populous villages are situated to each other, and numerous merchants live and conduct their business in them. [3] For they bring in merchandise from India, the neighboring regions of Iberia, and practically all the nations of Persia and some of those under Roman sway, and make deals with each other there. [4] The priest of the Christians is called *katholikos* in the Greek tongue, because he presides alone over the whole region. [5] Now at a distance of about 120 stades from Dvin, on the right as one travels from the land of the Romans, there is a mountain difficult to ascend and generally precipitous, and a village situated in a narrow space in rough terrain, Anglon by name. [6] Nabedes withdrew there with his whole army as soon as he learned of the invasion by the enemy and, confident in his position of strength, shut himself in. [7] The village lies at the mountain's extreme end and there is a strong fortress with the same name as this village on the steep mountainside. [8] So Nabedes blocked up the entrances into the village with stones and carts and thus made it even more difficult to access. [9] In front of it he dug a trench and stationed the army there, having filled some old cabins with infantry ambushes. Altogether the Persian army amounted to four thousand men.

[10] While these things were taking place, the Romans reached a place one day's journey from Anglon and, capturing one of the enemy who was going out as a spy, they asked where in the world Nabedes was. He claimed that the man had withdrawn from Anglon with the whole Mede army. [11] When Narses heard this, he was indignant and heaped reproaches and abuse upon his fellow commanders for their hesitation. [12] Others, too, began to do the very same thing, insulting each other, and from then on they were eager to plunder the country all around, giving up all thought of battle and danger. [13] So they broke camp in disorder, effectively leaderless, and advanced in utter confusion; they neither set a password among themselves, as is customary in such dangerous conditions, nor were arranged in proper divisions. [14] The soldiers marched mixed in with the baggage train, as if going to a leisurely plunder of great wealth. [15] But when they came near Anglon, they sent out spies who returned to them announcing the enemy array. [16] The generals were thunderstruck by the unexpectedness of it, but considered it disgraceful and unmanly to turn back when they had an army of such size, so they arranged the army in its three divisions, as well as circumstances allowed, and advanced straight at the enemy. [17] Petros held the right wing and Valerianos the left, while Martinos and his men arrayed themselves in the center. When they came close to their opponents, they halted and kept their formation, but not without confusion. [18] The cause for this was the difficulty of the ground, which was badly broken up, and also because they were entering battle in a spur-of-the-moment formation. [19] Meanwhile the barbarians, who had gathered themselves into a small space, were remaining quiet, considering the strength of their enemy, for Nabedes had ordered them not to begin the fighting under any circumstances, but if the enemy should attack them, to defend themselves with all their might.

[20] First Narses, with the Heruls and the Romans who were under him, came to blows with the enemy and, after a hard hand-to-hand struggle, he routed the Persians before him. [21] The barbarians in flight ascended on the run to the fortress, where they inflicted terrible injury upon one another in the narrow passage. [22] And then Narses urged his men forward and pressed still harder upon the enemy, and the rest of the Romans joined in the action. [23] But all of a sudden the men who were in ambush, as has been said, came out from the cabins along the narrow alleys and killed some of the Heruls, falling unexpectedly upon them, and they struck Narses himself a blow on the temple. [24] His brother Isaakes carried him out from among the fighting men, mortally wounded. He died shortly afterward, having proved himself a brave man in this battle. [25] Then, as was only to be expected, great confusion fell upon the Roman army, and Nabedes let out the whole Persian force upon his opponents. [26] Shooting into great masses of the enemy in the narrow alleys, the Persians killed a large number without difficulty, particularly the Heruls who had fallen upon the enemy with Narses at first and were fighting for the most part without protection. [27] For the Heruls have neither helmet nor breastplate nor any other protective armor, except a shield and thick jacket, which they fasten about them before entering battle.[259] [28] Herul slaves go into battle

259. For the Heruls as lightly armed, see also Jordanes, *Getica* 261.

without even a shield, and when they prove themselves brave men in war their masters permit them to protect themselves in battle with shields. That is the way of the Heruls.

[29] The Romans did not withstand the enemy and all of them fled as quickly as they could, never thinking of resistance and heedless of shame or of any other worthy motive. [30] But the Persians, suspecting that they had not turned thus to a shameless flight, but that they were setting ambushes against them, pursued them as far as the rough ground lasted and then turned back, not daring to fight a decisive battle on level ground, a few against many. [31] The Romans, however, and especially all the generals, supposing that the enemy would not cease in the pursuit, fled even faster, wasting not a moment; and they were urging on their horses as they ran with whips and cries, and throwing their breastplates and weapons in haste and confusion to the ground. [32] For they lacked the courage to array themselves against the Persians if they overtook them but placed all hope of safety in their horses' feet; in sum, the flight became such that scarcely any of their horses survived but, when they stopped running, they fell down and immediately expired. [33] This disaster proved to be so great for the Romans as none that had ever happened previously. Great numbers of them perished and still more fell into the hands of the enemy. [34] The enemy seized so many of their weapons and pack animals that Persia seemed as a result of this affair to have become richer. [35] And Adolios, while passing through a fortified place in this retreat—it was situated in Persarmenia—was struck on the head by a stone thrown by one of the inhabitants, and died there. As for the forces of Ioustos and Peranios, they invaded the country about Tarauna and, after gathering some little plunder, immediately returned.

543 **26.** The following year Chosroes, the son of Kavad, invaded the land of the Romans for the fourth time, leading his army toward Mesopotamia. [2] This invasion was made by Chosroes not against Justinian, the emperor of the Romans, nor indeed against any other man, but only against the God whom the Christians worship. [3] For when in the first invasion he withdrew after failing to capture Edessa,[260] both he and the magi fell into a great dejection as they had been worsted by the God of the Christians. [4] To lift their spirits, Chosroes spoke a threat in the palace that he would enslave all the people of Edessa, bring them to the land of Persia, and turn the city into a pasture for sheep. [5] Accordingly, when he had drawn near to the city of Edessa with his whole army, he sent some of the Huns who were with him against that part of the walls of the city that is above the hippodrome, with the purpose of doing no further harm than seize the flocks that the shepherds had driven there along the wall in great numbers; for they were confident in the strength of the place, as it was extremely steep, and supposed that the enemy would never dare to come so close to the wall. [6] So the barbarians were already laying hold of the sheep and the shepherds trying most valiantly to prevent them. [7] When many Persians had come to the assistance of the Huns, the barbarians succeeded in detaching some of the flock from there, but Roman soldiers and some

260. 2.12.31–34.

of the populace made a sally against the enemy and the battle became a hand-to-hand struggle; meanwhile, the flock of its own accord returned again to the shepherds. [8] Now one of the Huns who was fighting ahead of the others was making more trouble for the Romans than all the rest. [9] And some peasant made a good shot with a sling and hit him on the right knee, and he immediately fell from his horse to the ground, which heartened the Romans still more. [10] And the battle which had begun in the morning ended at midday, and both sides withdrew thinking that they had bested the other. [11] The Romans went inside the circuit-wall while the barbarians all pitched their tents and made camp about seven stades from the city.

[12] Then Chosroes either saw some dream-vision or else the thought occurred to him that if, after making two attempts, he were not be able to capture Edessa, he would earn much disgrace. [13] Accordingly he decided to sell his withdrawal to the people of Edessa for a great sum of money. [14] On the following day, Paulos the interpreter came to the wall and said that some of the Roman notables should be sent to Chosroes. [15] With all speed they chose out four of their illustrious men and sent them. [16] When these men reached the Mede camp, they were met, according to the king's order, by Zabergan, who first terrified them with many threats and then asked them which course was preferable to them, that leading to peace or that leading to war. [17] When the envoys agreed that they would choose peace rather than the dangers of war, Zabergan replied: "Then you must buy it from us for a great sum of money." [18] The envoys said that they would give as much as they had provided before, when he came against them after capturing Antioch. [19] Zabergan dismissed them with laughter, telling them to deliberate most carefully concerning their safety and only then to come again to them. [20] A little later Chosroes summoned them and, when they came before him, he recounted how many Roman towns he had previously enslaved and in what ways he had done it. He threatened that the people of Edessa would receive more cruel treatment at the hands of the Persians unless they give them all the wealth that they had inside the walls; only on this condition, he said, would the army depart. [21] When the envoys heard this, they agreed that they would purchase peace from Chosroes, if only he would not set impossible conditions for them. But the outcome of a conflict, they said, was clear to no one at all before the actual struggle. [22] For there was never a war whose outcome could be taken for granted by those who waged it. Thereupon Chosroes in anger commanded the envoys to leave quickly.

[23] On the eighth day of the siege, he wanted to erect an artificial hill against the circuit-wall of the city. He cut down many trees from the nearby districts and laid them together with their leaves in a square before the wall, at a point no missile from the city could reach. Then he heaped a huge amount of earth right upon the trees and, above that, threw on a great quantity of stones, not such as are suitable for building but cut at random; his goal was only to raise the hill as quickly as possible to a great height. [24] He kept laying on long timbers in the midst of the earth and the stones, and made them bind the structure together, in order that it not weaken as it grew in height. [25] But Petros, the Roman general (for he happened to be there with Martinos and Peranios), wishing to hinder the men who were engaged in this work, sent some of

the Huns who were under his command against them. [26] By making a sudden attack, they killed a great number, and one of the guardsmen, Argek by name, surpassed the others for he alone killed twenty-seven. [27] From that time on, the barbarians kept a close watch, and it was no longer possible for anyone to go out against them. [28] But when the builders engaged in this work advanced and came within range of missiles, then the Romans offered a most vigorous resistance from the city wall, using both their slings and bows against them. [29] Therefore the barbarians devised the following. They attached screens of goat's hair, of the kind that are called Kilikian, making them of adequate thickness and height, to long pieces of wood which they set before those who were working on the *agesta* (thus the Romans used to call in the Latin tongue the device that they were making).[261] [30] Behind this neither fire-missiles nor any other arrow could reach the workmen, but all were deflected by the screens and stopped there. [31] Then the Romans became terrified and sent the envoys to Chosroes in great trepidation, and with them also Stephanos, a physician of great learning among his contemporaries, who had once cured Kavad, the son of Peroz, when he was ill, and had been given great wealth by him. [32] Coming before Chosroes with the others, he spoke as follows:

Stephanos to Chosroes

> It has long been agreed by all that benevolence is the mark of a good king. [33] Therefore, most mighty king, while busying yourself with murders and battles and the enslavement of cities, it will perhaps be possible for you to win other names, but the reputation of being goodwill never be one of them. [34] Yet Edessa especially should suffer no adversity at your hand. [35] For there was I born, who, without any foreknowledge of the future, fostered you from childhood and counseled your father to appoint you his successor in the kingdom, so that to you I have proved the chief cause of the kingship of Persia, but to my fatherland of her present woes. [36] For men bring down upon their own heads most of the misfortunes that are going to befall them. [37] If any remembrance of such benefaction comes to your mind, do us no further injury and grant me this request, by which, O king, you will escape the reputation of being most cruel.

Such were the words of Stephanos. [38] But Chosroes declared that he would not depart from there before the Romans delivered to him Petros and Peranios, on the grounds that, being his hereditary slaves, they had dared to array themselves against him. [39] If it was not their pleasure to do this, the Romans must choose one of two alternatives, either to give the Persians five hundred *kentenaria* of gold or to receive into the city some of his associates who would search out all the money, both gold and silver, that was there and bring it to him, allowing everything else to remain with their present owners. [40] Such then were the words Chosroes hurled forth, as he hoped to capture Edessa with no trouble. As all the conditions that he had proposed to them seemed impossible, the envoys, at a loss and dejected, walked to the city. [41] And when they came inside the circuit-wall and reported the message from Chosroes, the whole city was filled with commotion and lamentation.

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261. From the Latin *agger*.

[42] Now the artificial hill was rising to a great height and was being extended forward with much haste. The Romans, being at a loss what to do, again sent the envoys to Chosroes. [43] When they reached the enemy camp and said that they had come to plead about the same things, they did not even gain a hearing of any kind from the Persians, but they were insulted and driven out from there with a great ruckus, and so returned to the city. [44] At first, then, the Romans tried to overtop the wall opposite the hill by means of another structure. But when the Persian work rose far above even this, they stopped their building and persuaded Martinos to make arrangements for a settlement in whatever way he wished. He then came near to the enemy's camp and began to speak with some of the Persian commanders. [45] They completely deceived Martinos by saying that their king desired peace but was utterly unable to persuade the emperor of the Romans to set aside his strife with him and establish peace. [46] They mentioned as evidence the fact that Belisarios, who in power and rank was far superior to Martinos, as even he himself would not deny, had recently persuaded the king of the Persians, when he was in the midst of Roman territory, to withdraw from there and return to Persia, promising that envoys from Byzantion would come to him at no distant time and establish peace securely,[262] but that he had done none of the things agreed upon, as he had been unable to overcome the determination of the emperor Justinian.

27. In the meantime the Romans did the following. They dug a tunnel from the city underneath the enemy's mound, commanding the diggers not to stop this work until they reached the point under the middle of the hill. They were planning to burn the mound there. [2] But as the tunnel advanced to about the middle of the hill, a clanging sound came to the ears of the Persians standing above. [3] Perceiving what was being done, they too began to dig from above on both sides of the middle, to catch the Romans doing the damage there. [4] But the Romans discovered this and abandoned the attempt, throwing earth into the place that had been hollowed out, and then began to work on the lower part of the mound at the end of it that was next to the wall, and by taking out timbers, stones, and earth, they opened a space like a chamber; then they threw in there dry trunks of trees that burn most easily, saturated them with cedar oil, and added much sulfur and bitumen. [5] That, then, was what they were preparing, while the Persian commanders would often meet with Martinos and discuss the same sorts of things as I mentioned above, making it seem that they were open to proposals for peace. [6] But when at last their hill was completed and raised to a great elevation, approaching the circuit-wall of the city and rising far above it in height, then they sent Martinos away, definitely refusing to arrange a treaty, and they intended from then on to devote themselves to active warfare.

[7] Accordingly the Romans immediately set fire to the tree trunks that had been prepared for this purpose. But when the fire burned only a certain part of the mound, and had not yet been able to penetrate through the whole mass, the wood was already entirely consumed. But they kept throwing fresh wood into the tunnel, not slackening their

262. 2.21.25.

efforts for a moment.[263] [8] When the fire was already burning throughout the whole mound, smoke appeared at night rising from every part of the hill and the Romans, who did not yet want the Persians to know what was happening, contrived the following. [9] They filled small pots with coals and fire and threw these along with fire-arrows in great numbers to all parts of the mound. The Persians who were keeping guard there began to go about in great haste to extinguish them, and supposed that the smoke was arising from them. [10] But as the trouble increased, the barbarians rushed up to help in mass and the Romans, shooting them from the wall, killed many. [11] Chosroes too came there about sunrise, followed by the greater part of the army, and upon mounting the hill, he first perceived what the trouble was. [12] He disclosed that the cause of the smoke was underneath, not in the missiles that the enemy were hurling, and he ordered the whole army to come to the rescue with all speed. [13] The Romans took heart and began to insult them, while of the barbarians some were throwing on earth and others water, where the smoke appeared, hoping thus to solve the problem; however, they were absolutely unable to accomplish anything. [14] For where the earth was thrown on, the smoke, as was natural, was checked at that place, but not long afterward it rose from another place, as the fire compelled it to force its way out wherever it could. Where the water fell it only succeeded in making the bitumen and the sulfur much more active, and caused them to exert their full force upon the wood nearby; and it constantly fanned the fire, as the water could not penetrate inside the mound in a quantity at all sufficient to extinguish the flame. [15] In the late afternoon the smoke became so great in volume that it was visible to the inhabitants of Karrai and others who dwelt far beyond them. [16] As a great number of Persians and of Romans had climbed up the mound, a fight took place and a hand-to-hand struggle, and the Romans won. [17] Then even the flames rose and appeared clearly above the mound, and the Persians abandoned this undertaking.

[18] On the sixth day after this, at early dawn, they made a secret attack on a certain part of the circuit-wall with ladders, at the point called the Fort. [19] As the Romans keeping guard there were slumbering in a peaceful sleep, when the night was drawing to its close they silently set ladders against the wall and were already ascending. [20] But one of the peasants alone among all the Romans happened to be awake, and with a shout and a great noise began to rouse them all. [21] A fierce struggle ensued in which the Persians were worsted, and they withdrew to their camp, leaving the ladders where they were, which the Romans drew up at their leisure. [22] Chosroes about midday sent a large part of the army against the so-called Great Gate in order to storm the wall. [23] And the Romans confronted them, not only the soldiers but even the peasants and some of the populace, and they conquered the barbarians in battle decisively and routed them. [24] While the Persians were still being pursued, Paulos the interpreter came from Chosroes and, going into the midst of the Romans, reported that Rekinarios had come from Byzantion to arrange the peace, and thus the two armies separated. [25] Now it

263. Euagrios, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.27, here following Prokopios' account, adds a later story that the fire would not light until the townspeople brought the image of Christ (the Mandylion) that had been sent to Abgar. This is the first attestation of the image.

was already some days since Rekinarios had arrived at the camp of the barbarians, [26] but the Persians had not disclosed this fact to the Romans, plainly awaiting the outcome of the attack on the wall, in order that, if they were able to capture it, they might not seem to be violating the treaty, while if there were defeated, as actually happened, they might draw up the treaty at the invitation of the Romans. [27] When Rekinarios had gone inside the gates, the Persians demanded that those who were to arrange the peace come to Chosroes without delay, but the Romans said that envoys would be sent three days later, for that just at the moment their general, Martinos, was unwell.

[28] Chosroes, suspecting that this was only a pretext, prepared for battle. He then threw a great mass of bricks upon the mound, and two days later came against the fortifications of the city with the whole army to storm the wall. [29] At every gate he stationed some of the commanders and a part of the army, encircling the whole wall in this way, and he brought up ladders and war-engines against it. [30] In the rear he placed all the Saracens with some of the Persians, not in order to assault the wall but, when the city was captured, they were to rope in the fugitives and catch them as in a dragnet. [31] Such, then, was the plan of Chosroes when he arranged the army in this way. The fighting began early in the morning, and at first the Persians had the upper hand. [32] For they were many fighting against a few, as most of the Romans had not heard what was going on and were utterly unprepared. [33] But as the conflict was prolonged, the city became full of commotion and ruckus, and the whole population, even women and little children, went up to the wall. [34] The adults were repelling the enemy most vigorously together with the soldiers, and many of the peasants fought amazingly against the barbarians. [35] Meanwhile, the women, children, and aged also were gathering stones for the fighters and assisting them in other ways. [36] Some also filled numerous cauldrons with olive oil and, after heating them over a fire a sufficient time everywhere along the wall, they poured the oil, while boiling fiercely, upon the enemy who were assaulting the wall, using a sort of whisk for the purpose, and in this way harmed them still more. [37] The Persians, therefore, soon gave up and began to throw down their arms; coming before the king, they said that they were no longer able to hold out in the struggle. [38] But Chosroes, in a passion of anger, drove them all on with threats and urged them forward against the enemy. [39] And they, with much shouting and din, led the towers and the other engines of war to the wall and set the ladders against it, in order to capture the city with one grand rush. [40] But as the Romans were shooting missiles densely and exerting all their strength to drive them off, the barbarians were powerfully turned back. And as Chosroes withdrew, the Romans would taunt him, inviting him to bring it on and storm the wall. [41] Only Azarethes at the so-called Soinai Gate was still fighting with his men, at the place they call the Three Towers. [42] As the Romans at this point were no match for them but were giving way before their assaults, already the outer wall, which they call a forward line of defense, had been breached by the barbarians in many places, and they were pressing most vigorously upon those who were defending themselves from the great circuit-wall. But at last Peranios with many soldiers and some of the people of Edessa went out against them, defeated them in battle, and

drove them off. [43] And so the assault, which had begun early in the morning, ended in the late afternoon, and both sides remained quiet that night, the Persians fearing for their palisade and for themselves, and the Romans gathering stones on the parapets and putting everything else in complete readiness, so as to fight the enemy on the next day if they attacked the wall. [44] On the following day, however, not one of the barbarians came against the fortifications. But on the day after that a part of the army, urged on by Chosroes, attacked the so-called Gate of Barlaos. The Romans confronted them and the Persians were decisively beaten in the battle and, after a short time, withdrew to the camp. [45] Then Paulos, the interpreter of the Persians, came to the wall and called for Martinos, in order to make arrangements for a truce. [46] Thus Martinos came to conference with the commanders of the Persians, and they concluded an agreement by which Chosroes received five *kentenaria* from the people of Edessa, and left them, in writing, a promise not to inflict any further injury upon the Romans. Then, after setting fire to all his palisades, he returned homeward with his whole army.

28. At this time two generals of the Romans died, Ioustos, the nephew of the emperor, and Peranios, the Iberian. Ioustos succumbed to disease, while Peranios fell from his horse in hunting and suffered a fatal rupture. [2] The emperor therefore appointed oth-
late 543 ers in their places, dispatching Markellos, his own nephew who was just arriving at the age of manhood, and Konstantianos, who a little earlier had been sent as an envoy with Sergios to Chosroes.[264] [3] Then the emperor Justinian sent Konstantianos and Sergios
late 544 a second time to Chosroes to arrange a truce. [4] They found him in Assyria, at a place where there are two towns, Seleukeia and Ktesiphon, built by the Macedonians, who after Alexander, the son of Philip, ruled over the Persians and the other nations there. [5] These two towns are separated by the Tigris river, for they have nothing else between them. [6] There the envoys met Chosroes and they demanded that he give back to the Romans the lands of Lazike and establish peace with them on a most secure basis. [7] But Chosroes said that it was not easy for them to come to terms with each other, unless they first declared an armistice and then continue to go back and forth to each other without so much fear to settle their differences and make a peace that would be secure for the future. [8] And it was necessary, he said, that in return for this permanent armistice the emperor of the Romans should give him money and also send a certain physician, Tribounos by name, in order to spend some specified time with him. [9] For it happened that this physician at a former time had rid him of a severe disease and as
spring 545 a result was especially beloved and missed by him. [10] When the emperor Justinian heard this, he immediately sent both Tribounos and the money, amounting to twenty *kentenaria*.[265] [11] In this way the treaty was made between the Romans and the Persians for five years, in the nineteenth year of the reign of the emperor Justinian.

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264. 2.24.3.

265. Tribounos was to stay for a year; see *Wars* 8.10.14–16 for his departure. One of Tribounos' two house calls to Chosroes is mentioned by pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 12.7p, in connection with the king's special diet.

[12] A little later, al-Harith and al-Mundhir, the rulers of the Saracens, waged a war against each other by themselves, unaided either by the Romans or the Persians.[266] [13] Al-Mundhir captured one of the sons of al-Harith in a sudden raid while he was pasturing horses, and immediately sacrificed him to Aphrodite.[267] From this it was known that al-Harith was not betraying Roman interests to the Persians. [14] Later they came together in battle with their whole armies, and al-Harith's forces were overwhelmingly victorious, turning their enemy to flight and killing many of them. Al-Harith came close to capturing two of al-Mundhir's sons alive, but did not. Such, then, was the course of events among the Saracens. [15] It also became clear that Chosroes, the king of the Persians, had made the truce with the Romans with treacherous intent, in order that he might allege that they had violated the peace and inflict upon them some grave injury. [16] In the third year of the truce he devised the following scheme. There were *547*
in Persia two brothers, Phabrizos and Yazdgushnasp, who both held most important offices and were considered to be the most wicked of all Persians, with a great reputation for cleverness and evil ways. [17] Chosroes formed a plan to capture the city of Daras by a sudden attack and move all the Kolchians out of Lazike and establish in their place Persian settlers, so he selected these two men to assist him in both undertakings. [18] For it seemed to him that it would be a stroke of luck and an important achievement to win for himself the land of Kolchis and to have it as a secure possession, reasoning that this would be advantageous to the Persian empire in many ways. [19] In the first place, they would subsequently hold Iberia in security, as the Iberians would not have anyone with whom, if they revolted, they might find safety. [20] Ever since the most notable men of these barbarians together with their king, Gourgenes, had looked toward revolt, as I stated in the previous book,[268] the Persians from then on did not permit them to set up a king over themselves, nor were the Iberians willing subjects of the Persians, but there was much suspicion and distrust between them. [21] It was evident that the Iberians were thoroughly dissatisfied and would rebel if they could but find a favorable opportunity. [22] Second, the Persian empire would forever be free from plunder by the Huns who lived next to Lazike, and he could send them against the Roman empire more easily and readily, whenever he should so desire. For Lazike was nothing else than a bulwark against the barbarians living in the Caucasus. [23] But most of all he hoped that the subjugation of Lazike would give this advantage to the Persians, that starting from there they might, either on foot or with ships, overrun the lands along the Black Sea with no trouble, and thus take over the Kappadokians along with the Galatians and Bithynians who adjoin them, and capture Byzantion by a sudden assault, with no one opposing them. [24] For these reasons, then, Chosroes was anxious to gain possession

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266. Prokopios is our only source for this conflict, which cannot be exactly dated. It has been proposed that this section, 2.28.12–14, or possibly only 2.28.14, may have been added later by Prokopios, maybe even as late as 554. This is his last mention of Arab affairs in the *Wars*, and so he placed this notice here.

267. I.e., al-ʻUzza.

268. 1.12.5.

of Lazike, but in the Lazoi he had no confidence. [25] For since the time when the Romans had departed from Lazike, the common Lazoi had naturally found the Persian rule oppressive. For Persians are beyond all other people singular in their ways, and they are excessively rigid in their way of life. [26] Their laws are inscrutable by other people and their decrees quite unbearable. But the difference in their thinking and living shows itself to an exceptional degree in comparison with the Lazoi, as the latter are staunch Christians while all Persian views about God are the exact opposite of theirs. [27] Apart from this, salt is produced nowhere in Lazike, nor indeed does grain grow there nor the vine nor any other good thing. [28] Everything is brought in to them by ship from the Romans along the coast, and even so they do not pay gold to the traders but hides, slaves, or whatever else happens to be found there in abundance. [29] So when they were excluded from this trade, they were, as was to be expected, in a state of constant discontent. Chosroes perceived this and he was eager to anticipate any move on their part to revolt against him, while it was still safe for him. [30] Considering the matter, it seemed to him the most advantageous course was to put Goubazes, the king of the Lazoi, out of the way as quickly as possible, and to move the Lazoi in a body out of the country, and then to colonize this land with Persians and certain other nations.

[31] When Chosroes had matured these plans, he sent Yazdgushnasp to Byzantion ostensibly to act as an envoy.[269] He picked out five hundred of the most excellent Persians and sent them with him, directing them to get inside the city of Daras, take lodgings in many different houses, and at night to set these all on fire; while all the Romans were preoccupied with this fire, as was natural, they were to open the gates immediately and receive the rest of the Persian army into the city. [32] For word had been sent previously to the commander of the city of Nisibis to conceal a large force of soldiers nearby and hold them in readiness. In this way Chosroes thought that they would destroy all the Romans with no trouble and, seizing the city of Daras, would hold it securely. [33] But someone who knew well what was being arranged, a Roman who had come to the Persians as a deserter a little earlier, told everything to Georgios, who was staying there at the time; this was the same man whom I mentioned above as having persuaded the Persians besieged in the fortress of Sisauranon to surrender to the Romans.[270] [34] Georgios met this ambassador at the boundary line between Roman and Persian soil and said that what was happening was inconsistent with an embassy: never had so numerous a body of Persians stayed the night in a city of the Romans. [35] He should have left behind all the rest in the town of Ammodios, as he could enter the city of Daras with only a few men. [36] Now Yazdgushnasp was indignant and appeared to take it badly that he had been insulted wrongfully even though he was dispatched on an embassy to

269. This is the first of five embassies on which Yazdgushnasp went to the Romans. Embedded in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* 1.89–90, we have a detailed protocol for the reception of a Persian ambassador in Constantinople, probably Yazdgushnasp; given the precautions that it stipulates for Daras, it probably reflects one of his later visits, after the Romans had learned their lesson.

270. 2.19.23.

the emperor of the Romans. [37] But Georgios disregarded his fury and so saved the city for the Romans. He received Yazdgushnasp into the city with only twenty men. *547/548*

[38] So having failed in this attempt, the barbarian came to Byzantion as if on an embassy, bringing his wife and two daughters (this was his pretext for the army he had brought with him). When he came before the emperor, he was unable to say anything great or small about any serious matter, although he wasted no less than ten months in Roman territory. [39] However, he gave the emperor gifts from Chosroes, as is usual, and a letter, in which Chosroes requested the emperor Justinian to send word whether he was in the best possible health. [40] Nevertheless, the emperor Justinian received this Yazdgushnasp with more friendliness and treated him with greater honor than any of the other ambassadors of whom we know. [41] This happened to such an extent that, whenever he entertained him, he had Bradoukios, who followed him as an interpreter, to recline with him on the couch, something that had never before happened in all time. [42] For no one ever saw an interpreter become a table companion of even one of the more humble officials, to say nothing of an emperor. [43] But he both received and sent away this man in a style more magnificent than befit an ambassador, although he had undertaken the embassy for no serious business, as I said. [44] If anyone counted up the expenses and the gifts that Yazdgushnasp carried with him when he went away, he would find they amounted to more than ten *kentenaria* of gold. So the plot against the city of Daras ended in this way for Chosroes.

29. Chosroes first sent into Lazike a great amount of lumber suitable for the construction of ships, explaining to no one what his purpose was in sending them, but ostensibly in order to set up engines of war on the fortifications of Petra. [2] Next he chose out three hundred able warriors of the Persians and sent them there under the command of Phabrizos, whom I just mentioned,[271] ordering him to do away with Goubazes as secretly as possible; as for its consequences, he would deal with them. [3] When this lumber had been conveyed to Lazike, it chanced to be struck suddenly by lightning and reduced to ashes. Phabrizos, upon arriving in Lazike with the three hundred, began to look for a way to carry out the order he received from Chosroes regarding Goubazes. [4] It happened that one of the men of note among the Kolchians, Pharsanses by name, had clashed with Goubazes and had become extremely hostile to him as a result, and now he did not dare at all to go into the presence of the king. [5] When Phabrizos learned this, he summoned Pharsanses to a conference and disclosed the whole project, asking him how he ought to go about the execution of the deed. [6] It seemed best to them after deliberating together that Phabrizos should go into the city of Petra and summon Goubazes there, in order to announce to him what the king had decided concerning the interests of the Lazoi. [7] But Pharsanses secretly revealed to Goubazes what was being prepared. Accordingly, he did not come to Phabrizos at all, but began openly to plan a revolt. [8] Phabrizos commanded the other Persians to take care to guard Petra with all

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271. 2.28.16.

their power and to prepare it as secure as possible for a siege; he himself with the three hundred departed for home without accomplishing his purpose. [9] Goubazes, meanwhile, reported to the emperor Justinian the condition of present affairs and begged him to forgive what the Lazoi had done in the past and to aid them with all his strength in their effort to be rid of rule by the Medes. For if left by themselves, the Kolchians would not be able to repel the power of the Persians.

548 [10] When the emperor Justinian heard this, he was overjoyed and sent seven thousand men under the leadership of Dagisthaios and a thousand Tzanoi to the assistance of the Lazoi. [11] When they reached the land of Kolchis, they encamped together with Goubazes and the Lazoi near the fortifications of Petra and commenced a siege. [12] But as the Persians there defended themselves most fiercely from the wall, it came about that much time was spent in the siege; for the Persians had put away an ample store of supplies in the town. [13] Chosroes, greatly disturbed by these events, dispatched a great army of cavalry and infantry against them, putting Mihr-Mihroe in command. When Goubazes learned this, he consulted with Dagisthaios and acted as follows.

[14] The river Boas rises close to the boundary of the Tzanoi by the Armenians who dwell around Pharangion. Its course inclines at first to the right for a long distance; its stream is small and can be forded by anyone with no trouble as far as the place where the boundaries of the Iberians lie on the right, and the Caucasus ends directly opposite.[272] [15] In that place many nations have their homes including the Alans and Abasgoi, who are Christians and friends of old to the Romans; also the Zechoi and after them the Huns who are also called Sabeiroi. [16] But when this river reaches the limits of the Caucasus and of Iberia as well, there other waters are added to it and it becomes much larger and from there flows on bearing the name of Phasis instead of Boas; it becomes a navigable stream as far as the Black Sea into which it empties; and on either side of it there lies Lazike. [17] Now to the right of it the whole country for a great distance is populated by locals as far as the boundary of Iberia. [18] For all the villages of the Lazoi here are beyond the river, and towns have been built there in ancient times, including Archaiopolis, a very strong place, Sebastopolis, and the fortress of Pityous, as well as Skanda and Sarapanis by the boundary of Iberia. The two significant cities in the latter region are Rodopolis and Mocheresis. [19] But to the left of the river, the limit of Lazike is one day's journey for an active traveler, and the land is devoid of people.[273] Adjoining that land is the home of the Romans who are called Pontians. [20] Now it was in the territory of Lazike, where no people lived, that the emperor Justinian founded the city of Petra in my own time. [21] This was where Ioannes, surnamed Tzibos, established the monopoly, as I said in the previous narrative,[274] and caused the Lazoi to revolt. [22]

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272. Here, and below, Prokopios confuses the Boas and the Phasis rivers; see 8.2.6–9 for a different version. His account of the geography of this region and its cities should be compared to Justinian's own in *Novel* 28 (preface).

273. See also 8.2.29.

274. 2.15.9–11.

As one leaves the city of Petra going south, Roman territory commences immediately and there are populous towns there, the one called Rizaion, also Athens, and certain others as far as Trebizond. [23] Now when the Lazoi brought in Chosroes, they crossed the Boas river and came to Petra keeping the Phasis on the right, claiming that they would thus not have to spend much time and trouble ferrying the men across the Phasis river, but in reality they did not wish to display their own homes to the Persians. [24] Yet Lazike is difficult to traverse everywhere, both to the right and the left of the Phasis river. [25] For there are on both sides extremely high and jagged mountains, and as a result the passes are narrow and very long. The Romans call these roads *kleisourai* when they are speaking in Greek.[275] [26] But since at that time Lazike happened to be unguarded, the Persians had reached Petra very easily with the Lazoi as guides.

[27] But now Goubazes, learning of the Persian advance, directed Dagisthaios to send some men to vigorously defend the pass that is below the Phasis river, and instructed him not to abandon the siege on any account until they captured Petra and the Persians in it. [28] He himself, meanwhile, with the whole Kolchian army came to the frontier of Lazike in order to guard the pass there with all his strength. [29] Now it happened that long before he had made an alliance with the Alans and Sabeiroi, and they had agreed for three *kentenaria* not merely to assist the Lazoi in preserving the land from plunder but also to make Iberia so destitute of men that not even the Persians would be able to come in from there in the future. Goubazes had promised that the emperor would give them this money. [30] He reported the agreement to the emperor Justinian and begged him to send this money to the barbarians and so provide the Lazoi with some consolation in their great distress. [31] He also stated that the treasury owed him his salary for ten years, for though he was ranked as a *silentiarius* at court,[276] he had not received any payment for that since Chosroes had come into the land of Kolchis. [32] The emperor Justinian intended to fulfill this request but some business came up to occupy his attention and he did not send the money at the proper time. So Goubazes was thus engaged.

[33] But Dagisthaios, being a young man and unqualified to carry on the Persian war, did not handle the situation properly. [34] He ought to have sent the greater part of the army to the pass, and perhaps personally attended to it himself, but instead he sent only a hundred men, as if he were managing a matter of secondary importance. He himself, moreover, although besieging Petra with the whole army, accomplished nothing, although the enemy were few. For while they had been at the beginning not less than fifteen hundred, [35] they had been shot at by Romans and Lazoi in their fighting at the wall for a long time, and had shown valor such as no others known to us have done, so that many were falling constantly and they were reduced to a small number. [36] So while the Persians were remaining quiet, plunged in despair and at a loss what to do, the Romans made a trench along the wall for a short distance, and the circuit-wall at this point fell immediately. [37] But it happened that inside this space

275. Latin *clausurae*.

276. See 2.22.2.

was a building that backed upon the circuit-wall, and this reached to the whole length of the fallen part; [38] thus, taking the place of the wall for the besieged, it kept them no less secure. [39] But this did not demoralize the Romans. Knowing well that by doing the same thing elsewhere they would capture the city with ease, they became still more hopeful than before. [40] For this reason Dagisthaios reported the developments to the emperor and suggested that prizes of victory should be prepared for him, indicating what rewards the emperor should bestow upon himself and his brother; for he would capture Petra shortly. [41] But the Persians unexpectedly withstood the Romans and the Tzanoi when they made a vigorous assault upon the wall, although only a few were left. [42] As the Romans were accomplishing nothing by assaulting the wall, they again turned to digging. They made such progress in this work that the foundations of the circuit-wall were no longer on solid ground but stood for the most part over empty space, and it was likely they would fall almost immediately. [43] And if Dagisthaios had been willing to set fire to the foundations immediately, I think that the city would have been taken by them immediately. But, as it was, he was awaiting promising signs from the emperor and so, always hesitating and wasting time, he remained inactive. Such, then, was the course of events in the Roman camp.

30. Mihr-Mihroe, after passing the Iberian frontier with the whole Mede army, was moving forward with the Phasis river on his right. For he was unwilling to go through the country of Lazike, in case he encountered any obstacle there. [2] He was eager to save the city of Petra and the Persians in it, even though a part of the circuit-wall had fallen down suddenly. [3] It had been hanging in the air, as I said; and volunteers from the Roman army, about fifty, got inside the city, and with a shout proclaimed the emperor Justinian triumphant. [4] They were led by a young man of Armenian birth, Ioannes by name, surnamed Gouzes, the son of Thomas. [5] Thomas had built many of the strongholds in Lazike at the emperor's orders, had commanded the soldiers there, and had seemed to the emperor an intelligent person.[277] [6] Now Ioannes, when the Persians joined battle with his men, was wounded and withdrew to the camp with his followers, as no one else of the Roman army came up to support him. [7] Meanwhile, a Persian, Mihran by name, who commanded the garrison in Petra, fearing for the city directed all the Persians to keep guard with the greatest diligence, and he himself went to Dagisthaios, addressed him with fawning speeches and deceptive words, agreeing readily to surrender the city not long afterward. In this way he managed to deceive him so that the Roman army did not immediately enter the city.

[8] Now when the army of Mihr-Mihroe came to the pass, the Roman garrison of a hundred men confronted them there and offered fierce resistance, and they checked the enemy's attempt to pass through. [9] But the Persians did not withdraw; those who fell were constantly replaced by others and they kept advancing, trying with all their strength to force their way in. [10] More than a thousand Persians died, but at last the

277. Thomas had been active in the region with the rank of general ca. 527–535.

Romans were worn out with killing and withdrew, forced back by the throng; they were saved by running up to the heights of the mountain there. [11] Dagisthaios, upon learning this, immediately abandoned the siege without giving any commands to the army and proceeded to the Phasis river. All the Romans followed him, leaving their possessions behind in the camp. [12] When the Persians observed what was going on, they opened their gates and came out, approaching the tents of the enemy in order to capture the camp. [13] But the Tzanoi, who had not followed after Dagisthaios, as it happened, rushed out to defend the camp, routed the enemy without difficulty, and killed many. [14] So the Persians fled inside their fortifications and the Tzanoi, after plundering the Roman camp, proceeded straight for Rizaion. From there they came to Athens and went home through the territory of Trebizond.

[15] Mihr-Mihroe and the Mede army came there on the ninth day after the withdrawal of Dagisthaios. They found left of the Persian garrison 350 men wounded and unfit for fighting, and only 150 men unhurt; all the rest had perished. [16] The survivors had not thrown the bodies of the fallen outside the walls but, although stifled by the evil stench, they held out in a manner beyond belief so as not to boost the enemy's morale in the prosecution of the siege, by letting them know that most of them had perished. [17] Mihr-Mihroe remarked by way of a taunt that the polity of the Romans was worthy of tears and lamentation, because they had come to such a state of weakness as to be unable by any device to capture 150 Persians who lacked a wall. [18] He was eager to build up the parts of the circuit-wall that had collapsed, but at the moment he had neither lime nor any of the other necessary materials for the building ready at hand, so he devised the following. [19] Filling with sand the linen bags in which the Persians had carried their provisions into the land of Kolchis, he laid them down in the place of the stones, and the bags thus arranged took the place of the wall. [20] Choosing three thousand of his able fighting men, he left them there, gave them supplies for a short time, and commanded them to attend to the building of the fortifications. Then he himself with all the rest of the army marched back. [21] But as no means of provisioning his army would be available if he left from there by the same road, given that he had left everything in Petra that had been brought in by the army from Iberia, he planned to go by another route through the mountains, where he learned that people lived, in order that by foraging there he might be able to live off the land. [22] In this journey, one of the notables among the Lazoi, Phoubelis by name, laid an ambush for the Persians while they were camping for the night, bringing with him Dagisthaios and two thousand Romans. By making a sudden attack, they killed some Persians who were grazing their horses, and after seizing the horses as plunder they shortly withdrew. Thus Mihr-Mihroe with the Mede army departed from there.

[23] Goubazes, upon learning what had happened to the Romans both at Petra and the pass, still did not become frightened nor give up guarding his pass, considering that their hope centered in that place. [24] He understood that, even if the Persians had been able to cross the pass and get into Petra by forcing back the Romans on the left of the Phasis river, they could thereby inflict no injury upon the land of the Lazoi

as they had no way to cross the Phasis, especially as they had no ships. [25] This river is as deep as any other and spreads out to a great width. [26] Moreover, it has such a strong current that when it empties into the sea, it goes on as a separate stream for a great distance without mingling at all with the seawater. Indeed, those who navigate in those parts are able to draw up drinking water in the midst of the sea. [27] The Lazoi have erected fortresses all along the right bank of the river so that, even when the enemy are ferried across in boats, they may not be able to disembark. [28] The emperor Justinian at this time sent to the nation of the Sabeiroi the money that had been agreed upon, and he rewarded Goubazes and the Lazoi with additional sums. [29] It happened that long before this time he had sent another considerable army also to Lazike, which had not yet arrived there. The commander of this army was Recithanc, from Thrace, a man of discretion and a capable warrior.[278] Such then was the course of these events.

[30] Now when Mihr-Mihroe got into the mountains, as I have said, he was anxious to fill Petra with provisions from there. For he did not think that the supplies they had brought in with them would suffice for the garrison there, amounting to three thousand men. [31] But as the supplies they found along the way barely sufficed for the needs of that army, which numbered no less than thirty thousand, and so were unable to send anything of consequence to Petra, upon consideration he found it better for them that the greater part of the army should depart from the land of Kolchis and that only a few should remain there, who were to convey to the garrison in Petra most of the provisions they found, while using the rest to maintain themselves comfortably. [32] He selected five thousand men and left them there, appointing as their commanders Phabrizos and three others. [33] For it seemed to him unnecessary to leave more men there, as there was no enemy present at all. He himself with the rest of the army came into Persarmenia and remained quietly in the country around Dvin.

spring 549 [34] Now the five thousand came near to the frontier of Lazike and encamped in a body beside the Phasis river; from there they went about in small bands to plunder the land. [35] When Goubazes perceived this, he sent word to Dagisthaios to hasten there to his assistance, for it would be possible for them to do the enemy great harm. [36] He did as directed, moving forward with the whole Roman army keeping the Phasis river on the left, until he came to the place where the Lazoi were encamped on the opposite bank of the river. [37] Now it happened that the Phasis could be forded at this point, a fact which neither the Romans nor the Persians suspected because of their unfamiliarity with these regions. But the Lazoi knew it well and they made the crossing suddenly and joined the Roman army. The Persians selected a thousand men of repute among them and sent them out, in case anyone advanced against the camp to harm it. [38] Two of this force, who had gone out ahead of the others on reconnaissance, fell unexpectedly into the hands of the enemy and revealed the whole situation. [39] The Romans and the Lazoi, therefore, fell suddenly upon the thousand men, not one of whom succeeded

278. This army appears never to have arrived.

in escaping: most of them were slain while some also were captured, from whom the men of Goubazes and Dagisthaios managed to learn the numbers of the Mede army, their distance from them, and the condition in which they were. [40] They therefore broke camp and marched against them with their whole army, calculating so that they would fall upon them well on in the night; and their own force amounted to fourteen thousand men. [41] Now the Persians, having no thought of an enemy in their minds, were enjoying a long sleep; for they supposed that the river was impassable and that the thousand men, with no one to oppose them, were making a long march. [42] But the Romans and Lazoi at early dawn unexpectedly fell upon them, finding some still deep in slumber and others just roused from sleep and lying unarmed upon their beds. [43] Not one of them, therefore, thought of resistance, and the majority were caught and killed while some were captured by the enemy, among whom happened to be one of the commanders; only a few escaped in the darkness and were saved. [44] The Romans and Lazoi captured the camp and all the standards, and they also secured many weapons and a great deal of money as plunder, besides great numbers of horses and mules. [45] Pursuing them for a very great distance they came well into Iberia. There they happened upon certain other Persians and slew many of them. [46] Thus the Persians departed from Lazike, and the Romans and Lazoi found there all the supplies, including great amounts of flour, that the barbarians had brought in from Iberia in order to transport them to Petra; and they burned it all. [47] They left many of the Lazoi in the pass so that it might no longer be possible for the Persians to bring supplies to Petra, and they returned with all the plunder and the captives. [48] And the fourth year of the truce between the Romans and Persians came to an end, the twenty-third year of the reign of the emperor Justinian.

[49] In the year before that, Ioannes the Kappadokian was summoned back to *548*
Byzantion by the emperor, for it was when the empress Theodora had reached the end of her life. [50] Ioannes was unable to salvage any of his former ranks and positions but retained, quite against his will, the dignity of the priesthood. And yet the vision had appeared often before the man's eyes that he would gain the imperial throne. [51] For some unearthly power likes to dangle visions of that which people find most seductive from the highest reaches of their loftiest hopes, especially if their minds are not solidly grounded in reality. [52] It was to Ioannes that the charlatans of portents were always peddling imaginary prophesies, and especially that which foretold that he would don the vestments of Augustus. [53] Now there was a certain priest in Byzantion named Augustus who guarded the treasury of the temple of Sophia. [54] So when Ioannes was tonsured and forced to take on the dignity of the priesthood, he had no clothes appropriate for a priest, and so those who were in charge of this matter required him to put on the cloak and tunic of this man Augustus, who was nearby. This, I think, was how the prophecy was fulfilled for him.[279]

279. This refers to the events of 541; see 1.25.31. Yet there Prokopios stated that Ioannes was ordained at Kyzikos and not Constantinople.

Book Three

1. Such, then, was the outcome of the Mede War for the emperor Justinian. I will now proceed to recount all that he did against the Vandals and the Moors. But first I will state from where the army of the Vandals descended upon the land of the Romans. [2] *17 Jan. 395* After Theodosius, the emperor of the Romans, had departed from the world, one of the most just of men and an able general, he was succeeded on the throne by his two sons, Arkadios, the elder, receiving the eastern portion, and Honorius, the younger, the western. [3] But the Roman state had been thus divided as early as Constantine and *330* his sons, for he transferred the seat of empire to Byzantion, making the city larger and much more renowned and allowing it to be named after him.

[4] The earth is encircled by the Ocean, either entirely or for the most part; our knowledge about this is not yet entirely clear. It is split into two continents by a sort of outflow from the Ocean that enters at the western part and forms our sea, beginning at Cadiz and extending all the way to the Sea of Azov. [5] Of these two continents the one to the right, as one sails into the sea, as far as the lake, is called Asia, beginning at Cadiz and the southern of the two Pillars of Herakles. [6] Septem is the name given by the natives to the fort there, given that seven hills appear there; for *septem* means seven in the Latin tongue. [7] The whole continent opposite to this was named Europe. The strait at that point is eighty-four stades wide and separates the two continents, but from there on they are kept apart by wide expanses of sea as far as the Hellespont. [8] At that point they again approach each other at Sestos and Abydos, and once more at Byzantion and Chalkedon as far as the rocks called in ancient times the "Dark Blue Rocks," which even now is called Hieron.[280] For at these places the continents are separated from one another by a distance of only ten stades, and even less than that.

[9] Now the distance from one of the Pillars of Herakles to the other, if one goes along the shore and does not pass around the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea but crosses from Chalkedon to Byzantion and from Otranto to the opposite mainland, is a journey of 285 days for an active traveler. [10] As for the lands about the Black Sea, which extends from Byzantion to the Sea of Azov, it would be impossible to tell everything with precision, as the barbarians beyond the Istros river, which they also call the Danube, make the shore of that sea impossible for the Romans to visit—except, indeed, that from Byzantion to the mouth of the Danube is a journey of twenty-two days, which should be added to the size of Europe by whomever is making the calculation. [11] On the Asiatic side, that is from Chalkedon to the Phasis river, which, flowing from the country of the Kolchians, descends to the Black Sea, the journey lasts for forty days.[281] [12] So

280. I.e., where the Bosporos meets the Black Sea, though Hieron is to the south, on the Asiatic side.
281. Cf. 8.5.33.

that the whole Roman domain, according to the distance along the sea at least, attains the measure of a 347 days' journey, if, as has been said, one ferries across the Adriatic Sea, which extends about eight hundred stades from Otranto. [13] For passage across that sea amounts to a journey of not less than four days. Such, then, was the size of the Roman empire in former times.

[14] Most of Libya fell to the emperor who held power in the West, and it had the length of a ninety days' journey, for such is the distance from Cadiz to the boundaries of Tripolis in Libya. In Europe, he received as his portion territory extending seventy-five days' journey, [15] for such is the distance from the northern of the Pillars of Herakles to the Adriatic Sea, and one might add also the distance around that sea. [16] The emperor of the East received territory extending 120 days' journey from the boundaries of Kyrene in Libya as far as Epidamnos, which lies on the Adriatic Sea and is presently called Dyrrachion, as well as that portion of the country about the Black Sea that, as previously stated, is subject to the Romans. [17] Now one day's journey is about 210 stades, or as far as from Athens to Megara. Thus, then, did the emperors of the Romans divide the two continents between them. [18] Among the islands, Britain, which is by far the largest of all islands that lie outside the Pillars of Herakles, was included, as is natural, with the western portion; as were, inside the Pillars, Ibiza, which lies in what we may call the Propontis of the Mediterranean Sea, just inside the opening where the Ocean enters, about seven days' journey from the opening, and two others near it, Majorca and Minorca, as they are called locally. [19] Each of the islands of the Mediterranean fell to the share of the emperor within whose boundaries it happened to lie.

2. Now while Honorius was holding imperial power in the West, barbarians took over *395–*
his land, and I will tell who they were and how they did so. [2] There were many Gothic *423*
nations in earlier times just as there are now, but the greatest and most important of all are the Goths, Vandals, Visigoths, and Gepids. In ancient times, however, they were named Sauromatai and Melanchlainoi;[282] there were some too who called these nations Getic. [3] All these, while distinguished from one another by their names, as has been said, do not differ in anything else at all. [4] For they all have white bodies and blonde hair, they are tall and good-looking, and have the same customs and practice a common religion. [5] For they are all of the Arian faith and have one language called Gothic. It seems to me that they all came originally from one tribe and were distinguished later by the names of those who led each group. [6] This people long used to dwell beyond the Danube river. Later the Gepids got possession of the country about Singidunum and Sirmium, on both sides of the Danube river, where they remain settled even down to my time.

[7] But the Visigoths, separating from the others, picked up from there and at first entered into an alliance with the emperor Arkadios, but later—for faith with the

282. Literally "Lizard Eyes" and "Black Cloaks."

Romans cannot dwell in barbarians—they turned to attack both emperors under the leadership of Alaric. Beginning with Thrace, they treated all Europe as hostile territory. [8] Now the emperor Honorius had previously been residing in Rome, with never a thought of war in his mind, but glad, I think, if men allowed him to remain quietly in his palace. [9] But when word came that the barbarians with a great army were not far off, but somewhere among the Taulantioi,[283] he abandoned the palace and fled in disorder to Ravenna, a strong city lying about at the end of the Adriatic Sea. [10] There are some who say that he brought in the barbarians himself because an uprising had been started against him by his subjects, but this does not seem to me trustworthy, as far, at least, as one can judge of the character of the man. [11] The barbarians, finding that they had no hostile force to encounter them, became the most cruel of all men. For they so destroyed all the cities they captured, especially those south of the Adriatic Sea, that no trace of them has remained up to my time unless, indeed, it might be one tower or one gate or some such thing that happened to remain. [12] They killed all the people, as many as came in their way, both old and young alike, sparing neither women nor children. Thus even up to the present time Italy is sparsely populated. [13] They also plundered all the money from the whole of Europe and, most important of all, they left in Rome nothing whatever of public or private wealth when they moved on to Gaul.

24 Aug. 410 But I will now tell how Alaric captured Rome.

[14] After much time had been wasted by him in the siege, and he had not been able to capture the place either by force or any other device, he formed the following plan. [15] Among the youths in the army whose beards had not yet grown, but who had just come of age, he chose three hundred whom he knew to be of good birth and had valor beyond their years, and told them secretly that he was about to make a present of them to certain of the patricians in Rome, pretending that they were slaves. [16] He instructed them that, as soon as they got inside the houses of those men, they were to display much gentleness and moderation and serve them eagerly in whatever tasks were laid upon them by their owners. [17] Not long afterward, on an appointed day at about midday when all those who were to be their masters would most likely be asleep after their meal, they were all to go to the gate called Salaria and, with a sudden rush, kill the guards, who would have no previous knowledge of the plot, and open the gates as quickly as possible. [18] After giving these orders to the youths, Alaric immediately sent ambassadors to the members of the senate, stating that he admired them for their loyalty toward their emperor and that he would trouble them no longer on account of their valor and faithfulness, with which it was plain that they were endowed to a great degree; in order that tokens of himself might be preserved among men both noble and brave, he wished to present each of them with some domestic servants. [19] After this declaration, he sent the youths not long afterward and commanded the barbarians to prepare for departure, and he let this be known to the Romans. [20] They heard his words gladly and, receiving the gifts, began to be extremely happy as they were utterly

283. The hinterland of Epidamnos-Dyrrachion, in modern Albania.

ignorant of the barbarian's plot. [21] For the youths, by being most obedient to their owners, averted suspicion, and in the camp some were already seen departing and raising the siege, while the rest were just on the point of doing the same. [22] But when the appointed day came, Alaric armed his whole force for the attack and kept it ready by the Salaria Gate; for it happened that he had encamped there at the beginning of the siege. [23] All the youths came to this gate at the time of day agreed upon and, assailing the guards suddenly, killed them, opened the gates, and received Alaric and the army into the city at their leisure. [24] The army set fire to the houses by the gate, among which was the house of Sallust, who in ancient times wrote the history of the Romans,[284] and the greater part of this house has stood half burned up to my time. After plundering the whole city and destroying most of the Romans, they moved on. [25] At that time they say that the emperor Honorius in Ravenna received the message from one of the eunuchs, evidently a keeper of the poultry, that Rome had perished. And he cried out and said, "Yet he just ate from my hands!" [26] For he had a huge rooster, Rome by name. The eunuch, comprehending his words, said that it was the *city* of Rome that had perished at the hands of Alaric. The emperor answered with a sigh of relief: "But I, my good fellow, thought that my fowl Rome had perished." So great, they say, was the stupidity of this emperor.

[27] But some say that Rome was not captured in this way by Alaric, but that Proba, a woman most eminent in wealth and reputation among the Roman senatorial class,[285] felt pity for the Romans, who were being destroyed by hunger and the other suffering that they were enduring, for they were already even tasting each other's flesh. Seeing that every good hope had left them, as both the river and the harbor were held by the enemy, she commanded her servants, they say, to open the gates at night. [28] At any rate, when Alaric was about to depart from Rome, he declared Attalus, one of their nobles, emperor of the Romans, investing him with the diadem and the purple and everything else that pertains to the imperial dignity. He did this with the intention of removing Honorius from his throne and giving the entire western empire to Attalus.[286] [29] With this purpose, then, both Attalus and Alaric were going with a great army against Ravenna. But Attalus was neither able to think for himself nor to be guided by *409*
one who had wisdom to offer. [30] So while Alaric did not approve the plan, Attalus sent commanders to Libya without an army.[287] Thus, then, were these things going on.

284. This was the first-century BC historian Gaius Sallustius Crispus; his *Jugurthine War* and *Conspiracy of Catilina* survive, his *History* only in fragments.

285. Anicia Faltonia Proba was the daughter, wife, and mother of consuls. She was in Rome during the sack and then fled to Africa, where she was badly treated by the rebel governor Heraclianus (the murderer of Stilicho). This story about her is not otherwise attested.

286. Priscus Attalus was proclaimed emperor by Alaric at Rome in 409 but deposed in 410, before the sack of Rome, when Alaric and Honorius made an alliance. After that he remained with the Goths until he fell into Honorius' hands in 415.

287. In 409 or early 410, Attalus sent Constans to Africa to replace the governor Heraclianus but did not give him an army and so he was killed. Alaric had suggested that he send an army too.

[31] The island of Britain revolted from the Romans and the soldiers there chose
407 as emperor Constantinus, a man of no mean station. He immediately gathered a fleet
408 of ships and a formidable army and invaded both Spain and Gaul with a great force,
intending to subjugate them.[288] [32] But Honorius was holding ships in readiness and
waiting to see what would happen in Libya, in order that, if those sent by Attalus were
repulsed, he might himself sail for Libya and retain some part of his own kingdom,
while if matters there went against him, he might go to Theodosios [II] and remain
with him. [33] For Arkadios had died long before and his son Theodosios, still a
408– young child, held power in the East. [34] While Honorius was thus anxiously await-
450 ing the outcome and was tossed amid the billows of Chance, it happened that some
wonderful pieces of good fortune befell him. [35] For God likes to assist and side
with those who are neither clever nor able to devise anything of themselves, if they
happen not to be wicked, when they are at the peak of despair. Such a thing, indeed,
410 happened by chance to this emperor. [36] For it was suddenly reported from Libya
that the commanders of Attalus had been destroyed and that a host of ships was at
hand from Byzantion with a great number of soldiers who had come to assist him,[289]
although he had not expected them, and that Alaric had quarreled with Attalus,
stripped him of the rank of emperor, and was now keeping him under guard as a
private citizen.[290] [37] Alaric then died of disease and the army of the Visigoths under
the rule of Athaulf proceeded into Gaul;[291] also Constantinus, defeated in battle,
411 died with his sons.[292] [38] However, the Romans were unable to recover Britain,
which remained under tyrants from that time on. [39] Meanwhile the Goths [i.e., Ostrogoths], after crossing the Danube, first occupied Pannonia but afterward, with the emperor's permission, inhabited the country of Thrace. [40] After spending no great time there they conquered the West. But this will be told in the narrative concerning the Goths.[293]

3. Now the Vandals dwelling about the Sea of Azov, as they were pressed by hunger, moved to the country of the Germans, who are now called Franks, and the river Rhine,

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288. Constantinus III (r. 407–411) was the third rebel tossed up by the armies in Britain in 406/407. He held Britain, Gaul, and Spain while the drama of Stilicho and Alaric played out.

289. In 410, Honorius was being pressed hard by Alaric and Attalus, was forced to partially recognize the latter, and was making overtures to Constantinus III in Gaul, when a force of four thousand men arrived from the eastern empire.

290. For Alaric and Attalus, see 3.2.28 and the note there.

291. Athaulf (r. 410–415) was Alaric's brother-in-law and successor. He led the Visigoths out of Italy and into Gaul and then Spain.

292. Constantinus III faced defection among his own generals and was defeated by Honorius' general Flavius Constantius III, on whom see 3.3.4. His sons were Constans (proclaimed Caesar) and Julianus.

293. 5.1.9–31.

associating with themselves the Alans, a Gothic people.[294] [2] Then from there, under
the leadership of Godigisclus, they established themselves in Spain, which is the first *409*
province of the Roman empire on the side of the Ocean. Honorius had then allowed
Godigisclus to settle there on condition that it not be to the detriment of the country.[295]
[3] But there was a law among the Romans that if any persons fail to keep their property
in their own possession and thirty years pass in this way, that these persons should no
longer be entitled to proceed as its owners against those who had forced them out, but
they could be excluded by the defendant from access to the court. So he established a
law that whatever time was spent by the Vandals in the Roman domain should not at
all count toward this thirty-year exclusion. [4] Honorius himself, when the West had *15 Aug.*
been driven by him to this pass, died of disease. Now before this, it happened that the *423*
imperial power had been shared by Honorius with Constantius [III], the husband of
Placidia,[296] the sister of Arkadios and Honorius, but he lived to exercise that power only
a few days and then, becoming seriously ill, he died while Honorius was still alive, *8 Feb.–*
having failed to say or do anything worth telling; for the time was not sufficient dur- *2 Sept.*
ing which he lived in possession of imperial power. [5] Now a son of this Constantius, *421*
Valentinian [III], a child just weaned, was being raised in the palace of Theodosios
[II],[297] but the members of the imperial court in Rome chose one of the soldiers there,
Ioannes by name, as emperor. [6] This man was both gentle, mature with wisdom, and
quite capable of virtuous deeds. [7] At any rate he held the tyranny for five years[298]
and governed with moderation, neither giving ear to slanderers nor committing any *20 Nov.*
unjust murder, not willingly at least, nor did he set his hand to robbing men of *423–Oct.*
money. But he did not prove able to do anything at all against the barbarians, as his *425*
relations with Byzantion were hostile. [8] Against this Ioannes, Theodosios [II], the son
of Arkadios, sent a large army with Aspar and Ardabourios, the son of Aspar, as generals; he removed power from him and gave the imperial power to Valentinian, who was
still a child.[299] [9] Valentinian took Ioannes alive, brought him out in the hippodrome
of Aquileia with one of his hands cut off, and paraded him on an ass; then, after he had
suffered much mistreatment and abuse from the stage performers there, he put him to

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294. Actually, the Alans spoke an Iranian language. We have no evidence of the Vandals as far east as the Sea of Azov; their first raids on Roman territory (in 401/402) affected the middle Danube region. They were then located west of the Carpathians.

295. Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks* 2.9, says that Godigyselus was killed in battle with the Franks, before the Vandals crossed the Rhine. In his *History Against the Pagans* 7.43.14–15, Orosius, a contemporary and native of Spain, implies that the Vandals were in Spain without Roman permission.

296. Aelia Galla Placidia was the daughter of Theodosius I and his second wife, Galla. She had married Athaulf in 414 and Constantius in 417.

297. Galla Placidia had fallen out with her brother Honorius and fled to Constantinople with her son by Constantius, Valentinian III.

298. Actually, only eighteen months.

299. Valentinian III was born on 2 July 419, so was six years old.



Gold solidus of the emperor Valentinian III.

death. Thus Valentinian took over the power of the West. [10] But Placidia, his mother, had raised this emperor and educated him in an effeminate manner, and because of this he was filled with evil from childhood. [11] He associated mostly with sorcerers and astrologers and was an extraordinarily zealous pursuer of love affairs with other men's wives. He conducted himself in a most indecent manner, although he was married to a woman of exceptional beauty.[300] [12] Not only that, he failed to recover for the empire anything that it had lost before, and he lost Libya in addition and was himself killed.
16 Mar. 455 [13] When he perished, his wife and children were taken captive.[301] The disaster in Libya came about as follows.

[14] There were two Roman generals, Aetius and Bonifatius, especially powerful men and inferior to none of that time in experience of many wars. [15] These two fell out with each other politically but they attained such a degree of high-mindedness and virtue in every respect that, if one were to call either of them "the last man of the Romans," he would not err, so true was it that all the excellent qualities of the Romans were summed up in these two men. [16] One of them, Bonifatius, was appointed by
423 Placidia general of all Libya. This was not what Aetius wanted, but he by no means disclosed the fact that it did not please him. For their hostility had not yet come to light, being concealed behind the face of each. [17] But when Bonifatius was out of
427 the way, Aetius slandered him to Placidia, saying that he was setting up a tyranny and had deprived her and the emperor of all Libya, and he said that it would be easy for her to find out the truth: if she summoned Bonifatius to Rome, he would never come. [18] When the woman heard this, Aetius seemed to her to speak well and she acted accordingly. But Aetius, anticipating her, wrote to Bonifatius secretly that the mother

300. Valentinian III married Licinia Eudoxia in 437; she was the daughter of Theodosios II.

301. For the death of Valentinian III and the captivity of his family, see 3.4.

of the emperor was plotting against him and wanted to put him out of the way. [19] He predicted to him that there would be convincing proof of the plot, for he would be summoned very shortly for no reason at all. That is what his letter declared. [20] Bonifatius did not disregard the message, for as soon as those arrived who summoned him to the emperor he refused to obey the emperor and his mother, disclosing to no one the warning of Aetius. [21] When Placidia heard this, she thought that Aetius was extremely loyal to the emperor's cause and took under consideration the question of Bonifatius. [22] Bonifatius, however, as it did not seem to him that he was able to array himself against the emperor, nor did it appear that there would be any safety for him if he returned to Rome, began to consider whether it would be possible for him to have a defensive alliance with the Vandals; as was said above, they had established themselves *428*
in Spain, not far from Libya. [23] Godigisclus had died there and his sons had inherited the command, Gontharis, who was born to him from his wedded wife, and Geiseric, of illegitimate birth. [24] But the former was still a child and not energetic, while Geiseric had been excellently trained in warfare and was the cleverest of men. [25] Bonifatius accordingly sent his own most intimate friends to Spain and gained the adherence of each of the sons of Godigisclus on terms of complete equality, it being agreed that each one of the three would hold a third part of Libya and rule over his own subjects; but if anyone should come against any one of them to make war, they would jointly fight off the aggressors. [26] On the basis of this agreement the Vandals crossed the strait at Cadiz and came into Libya, and the Visigoths in later times settled in Spain. [27] But in *429*
Rome the friends of Bonifatius, remembering the character of the man and considering how irrational his action was, were greatly astonished that Bonifatius was setting up a tyranny, and some of them at the order of Placidia went to Carthage. [28] There they met Bonifatius and saw the letter of Aetius; after hearing the whole story they returned to Rome as quickly as they could and reported to Placidia how Bonifatius stood in relation to her. [29] Though the woman was dumbfounded, she did nothing unpleasant to Aetius nor did she upbraid him for what he had done to the emperor's house, for he himself wielded great power and the affairs of the empire were already in a bad state. But she disclosed to the friends of Bonifatius the warning Aetius had given and, offering oaths and pledges of safety, entreated them to persuade the man, if they could, to return to his fatherland and not permit the empire of the Romans to lie under the hand of barbarians. [30] When Bonifatius heard this, he repented of his action and his agreement with the barbarians, and he begged them, promising them everything, to leave from Libya. [31] But they did not receive his words with favor, considering that they were being insulted, so he was compelled to fight with them and, being defeated in the battle, *spring*
he withdrew to Hippo Regius, a strong city in Numidia by the sea. [32] There the *430*
Vandals made camp under the leadership of Geiseric and began a siege; for Gontharis had already died, they say, at the hand of his brother. [33] The Vandals, however, do not agree with this but say that Gontharis was captured in battle by the Germans in Spain and impaled, and that Geiseric was already sole ruler when he led the Vandals into Libya. Thus have I heard it told by the Vandals. [34] But after much time had passed,

spring 430– as they were unable to secure Hippo Regius either by force or surrender and were
summer 431 being pressed by hunger, they raised the siege. [35] A little later Bonifatius and the Romans in Libya, seeing as a large army had come from both Rome and Byzantion and Aspar with them as general, decided to renew the struggle and a fierce battle was
432 fought in which they were badly beaten by the enemy; they hastened to flee as each one could. [36] Aspar went home and Bonifatius, coming to Placidia, acquitted himself of the suspicion, showing that it had arisen against him for no true cause.

4. So the Vandals held Libya after taking it from the Romans in this way. Those of the enemy whom they took alive they reduced to slavery and held under guard. [2] Among them happened to be Markianos, who later upon the death of Theodosios assumed the imperial power. [3] At that time, Geiseric commanded the captives to be brought into the king's courtyard so that he could look upon them and know what master each of them might serve without diminishing his dignity. [4] When they were gathered under the open sky, about midday in the summer, they were distressed by the sun and sat down. Somewhere among them Markianos was sleeping neglected. [5] Then an eagle flew over him spreading out his wings, as they say, and by always remaining in the same place in the air he cast a shadow over Markianos alone. [6] Seeing what was happening from the upper story, Geiseric, an extremely discerning person, suspected that the thing was a divine manifestation and, summoning the man, asked him who he was. [7] He replied that he was Aspar's confidential secretary, which the Romans call *domesticus* in their tongue. [8] When Geiseric heard this, he considered the meaning of the bird's action and remembered how great a power Aspar exercised in Byzantion, and so it became evident that the man would be emperor. [9] Thus he did not hold it right to kill him, reasoning that if he removed him from the world, it would be clear that he was nullifying what the bird had done (for it would not honor with its shadow a king who was just about to die), and that he would be killing him for no good reason. If, on the other hand, it was fated that in later times the man would become emperor, he would then never be able to inflict death upon him, for that which has been decided by God could never be prevented by a man's decision. [10] So he bound Markianos by oaths that if it were to be in his power, he would never take up arms against the Vandals at least.[302] Thus, then, Markianos was released and came to Byzantion and, when at a
450 later time Theodosios died, he received the empire. [11] And in all other respects he proved himself a good emperor, but he paid no attention at all to affairs in Libya. But this happened in later times.

[12] At that time Geiseric, after defeating Aspar and Bonifatius in battle, displayed a foresight worth recounting, by which he strengthened his good fortune. [13] He feared that, if an army came against him again from both Rome and Byzantion, the Vandals would be unable to muster a like strength and fortune (as human affairs fail before

302. This the first occurrence of this legendary tale. In Theophanes, *Chronographia* a.m. 5943 (p. 104), it is coupled with a similar variant set in Lykia.

supernatural power and tend to falter through the weakness of men's bodies), he was not lifted up by the good fortune he had enjoyed but became humble because of what he
feared. Accordingly, he made a treaty with the emperor Valentinian [III] providing that *442*
each year he should pay the emperor tribute from Libya, and he delivered over one of his sons, Huneric, as a hostage to ratify this agreement. [14] So Geiseric both showed himself a brave man in battle and shored up his victory as securely as possible. As the friend-
ship between the two sides increased greatly, he received back his son Huneric. [15] *27 Nov.*
At Rome Placidia had died before this time and after her, Valentinian, her son, also *450*
died with no male offspring, but two daughters had been born to him from Eudoxia, the
child of Theodosios [II]. I will now relate in what manner Valentinian died. *455*

[16] There was a certain Maximus, a Roman of the senate, of the house of that Maximus who, while usurping the imperial power, was overthrown by the elder Theodosius [I] and put to death,[303] and on whose account also the Romans celebrate the annual festival named from the defeat of Maximus.[304] [17] This younger Maximus was married to a woman discreet in her ways and extremely celebrated for her beauty. For this reason a desire came over Valentinian to bed her. [18] But even though he wanted it, there was no way it could happen, so he plotted an unholy deed and carried it to completion. [19] He summoned Maximus to the palace and sat down with him to a game of checkers, and a certain sum was set as a penalty for the loser. [20] The emperor won in this game and, receiving Maximus' ring as a pledge for the agreed amount, he sent it to the other man's house, instructing the messenger to tell his wife that Maximus was asking her to go as quickly as possible to the palace to be received by the empress Eudoxia. [21] Judging by the ring that the message was from Maximus, she entered her litter and was conveyed to the emperor's court. [22] But she was taken by those who had been assigned to this deed by the emperor, and led into a certain room far removed from the women's apartments, where Valentinian met her and raped her, against her will. [23] After the outrage, she went to her husband's house in tears, feeling the deepest possible grief because of her misfortune. She cast many curses upon Maximus as having provided the cause for what happened. [24] Maximus, accordingly, became extremely aggrieved at these events and immediately began to plot against the emperor. When he saw that Aetius had grown very powerful, for he had recently defeated Attila who had invaded the Roman empire with a large army of Massagetai and other Skythians,[305] he realized that Aetius would block his undertaking. [25] Considering this matter, it seemed to him better to put Aetius out of the way first, paying no heed to the fact that the whole hope of the Romans centered on him. [26] As the eunuchs attending upon the emperor were well-disposed toward him, he persuaded the emperor by their contrivances that Aetius was planning a rebellion. [27] Valentinian,

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303. Magnus Maximus held imperial power in the West in 383–388; it is unlikely that Petronius Maximus was descended from him, as Prokopios is the first to claim here.

304. This is our only evidence for this festival.

305. This is a reference to the battle of the Catalaunian Plains of 451, where Attila was defeated.

judging by nothing else than the power and virtue of Aetius that the report was true, *21 or 22 Sept. 454* put the man to death. [28] Whereupon a certain Roman made himself famous by a saying that he uttered. For when the emperor asked him whether he had done well in putting Aetius to death, he replied by saying that he was not able to know whether it had been done well or otherwise, but one thing he understood perfectly, that he had cut off his own right hand with the other.

[29] So after the death of Aetius, Attila, with no one to stand against him, plundered all Europe with no trouble and made both empires subservient and tributary to himself.[306] For tribute money was sent to him every year by the emperors. [30] At that time, *452* while Attila was besieging Aquileia,[307] a large and populous city situated near the sea and above the Adriatic, they say that the following good fortune befell him. [31] They say that, when he was able to capture the place neither by force nor any other means, he gave up the siege which had already lasted a long time, and commanded the whole army to prepare for departure without delay, so that all might depart from there at sunrise on the next day. [32] So the next day about sunrise, the barbarians had raised the siege and were already beginning the departure, when a single stork that had a nest on a tower of the city wall and was rearing his nestlings there suddenly rose and left the place with his young. [33] As the father stork was flying, the little storks, who were not yet quite ready to fly, were at times sharing their father's flight and at times riding upon his back, and thus they flew off and away from the city. [34] When Attila saw this—for he was most clever at comprehending and interpreting all things—he commanded the army to remain in the same place, adding that the bird would never have flown off at random from there with its nestlings unless it was prophesying that some evil would soon come to the place. [35] Thus, they say, the army of the barbarians settled down to the siege once more, and not long after that a part of the wall, the very one that held the nest of that bird, suddenly fell down for no apparent reason making it possible for the enemy to enter the city at that point. Thus Aquileia was captured by storm. Such is the story concerning Aquileia.

16 Mar. 455 [36] Later Maximus slew the emperor with no trouble and secured the tyranny, and he married Eudoxia by force. For the wife to whom he had been wedded had died not long before. On one occasion when they were in bed together he made the statement to Eudoxia that it was because of his passion for her that he had carried out all that he had done. [37] She felt revulsion for him even before that, and had wanted to exact vengeance from him for the injustice done to Valentinian, so his words made her swell with rage still more against him and induced her to carry out her plot, as she had heard Maximus say that her husband had come to a bad end because of her. [38] As soon as day came, she sent to Carthage entreating Geiseric to avenge Valentinian, who had been destroyed by an unholy man in a manner unworthy both of himself and his imperial station, and to rescue her, who was suffering unholy treatment at the hand of a tyrant.

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306. Actually, Attila died in 453, before Aetius.

307. At this point Prokopios switches from an unknown source to the now-lost *History* of Priskos of Panion (*fr.* 22.2), which possibly accounts for the chronological error (see previous note).

[39] She impressed it upon Geiseric that he was a friend and ally, and so great a calamity had fallen upon the imperial house that it would not be right for him to fail to become an avenger. For from Byzantion she thought no vengeance would come, as Theodosios [II] had already departed from the world and Markianos had taken over the empire.

5. Geiseric, for no other reason than that he suspected that he would gain much money, set sail for Italy with a great fleet. Going up to Rome, as no one stood in his way, he took possession of the palace. [2] While Maximus was trying to flee, the Romans threw stones at him and killed him, and they severed his head and each of his limbs *31 May*
and divided them among themselves. [3] Geiseric took Eudoxia captive along with *455*
Eudocia and Placidia, her children by Valentinian, and, placing a huge amount of gold and other imperial treasure in his ships,[308] he sailed to Carthage, having spared neither the bronze nor anything else whatever in the palace. [4] He plundered also the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and tore off half the roof. This roof was of bronze of the finest quality and, as a thick layer of gold had been poured over it, it shone as a magnificent and wonderful spectacle.[309] [5] But one of the ships with Geiseric, which was bearing the statues, was lost, they say, yet the Vandals reached port in the harbor of Carthage with all the others. [6] Geiseric then married Eudocia to Huneric, the elder of his sons. *ca.*
The other of the two women, who was married to Olybrius, a most distinguished man *462*
in the Roman senate, he sent to Byzantion together with her mother, Eudoxia, at the request of the emperor. [7] Now the power of the East had by now fallen to Leon, who had been set in this position by Aspar when Markianos passed from the world. *457*

[8] Afterward Geiseric devised the following plan. He tore down the walls of all the cities in Libya except Carthage, so that the Libyans themselves could not have a strong base from which to begin a rebellion if they sided with the Romans, and so that those sent by the emperor could not have any hope to capture a city and make trouble for the Vandals by establishing a garrison in it. [9] Now at that time it seemed that he had planned it well and had ensured prosperity for the Vandals in the safest possible manner, but in later times when these cities, being without walls, were captured by Belisarios all the more easily and with less exertion, Geiseric was then made the butt of much ridicule, and that which was formerly considered his wisdom was now set down as his folly. [10] For people always like to change their opinions about plans made in the past to reflect changes in fortune. [11] Among the Libyans, all the notables and the most wealthy men he handed over as slaves, together with their fields and all their money, to his sons Huneric and Gento. For Theodoros, the youngest son, had died already, being himself without offspring, either male or female. [12] And he robbed the rest of the Libyans of their fields, which were both numerous and excellent, and distributed them among the nation of the Vandals, as a result of which these lands have been called "the Vandals'

308. Including the spoils of Jerusalem, taken by Titus; see 4.9.5.

309. For the gilding on the roof of this temple, see Plutarch, *Publicola* 15.3 (Domitian spent twelve thousand talents on it).

estates" up to the present time.[310] [13] Those who had formerly possessed these lands fell into extreme poverty but they were still free men and had the right to go away wherever they wished. [14] Geiseric commanded that all the lands which he had given over to his sons and to the other Vandals should not be subject to any kind of taxation. [15] As much of the land as did not seem to him good he allowed to remain in the hands of its former owners, but assessed so large a sum to be paid on this land in taxes to the government that nothing whatever remained to those who retained their own farms. Many of them were being sent into exile or killed. [16] For many charges were brought against them, and heavy ones too, [17] but one seemed to be the greatest of all, that a man, having money of his own, was hiding it. Thus the Libyans suffered every form of misfortune.

[18] The Vandals and the Alans he arranged in companies, appointing over them no fewer than eighty captains, whom he called *chiliarchoi* [commanders of a thousand], making it appear that his army in service amounted to eighty thousand. [19] Yet the number of the Vandals and Alans was said in former times, at least, to amount to no more than fifty thousand men. [20] However, after that time by having children and by associating other barbarians with them they came to be an extremely numerous people.[311] [21] The names of the Alans and all the other barbarians, except the Moors, were united in the name of Vandals.[312] [22] At that time, after the death of Valentinian, Geiseric gained the support of the Moors and every year at the beginning of spring he made invasions into Sicily and Italy, enslaving some of the cities, razing others to the ground, and plundering everything. When that land had become destitute of men and money, he then invaded the domain of the eastern emperor. [23] He plundered Illyria and most of the Peloponnese and the rest of Greece and all the islands that lie near it. Then again he went off to Sicily and Italy, and kept plundering and pillaging all places in turn. [24] One day when he had embarked on his ship in the harbor of Carthage and the sails were already being spread, the captain asked him, they say, against whom it was his order that they sail. [25] And he replied by saying: "Clearly, against those with whom God is angry." Thus without any cause he kept making invasions wherever chance led him.

6. The emperor Leon, wishing to punish the Vandals for these things, was gathering
468 an army against them,[313] which, they say, amounted to about one hundred thousand men. He collected a fleet of ships from the entire eastern Mediterranean, showing great

310. The *sortes Vandalorum* in Latin, mostly in Africa Proconsularis. This passage has caused much debate about the manner of the Vandal settlement. The other key passage, which presents a more complicated picture, is Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution* 1.12–14.

311. Cf. *Secret History* 18.6, for the same number of the Vandals. Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution* 1.2 claims that eighty thousand men (of all ages) crossed the straits of Gibraltar.

312. The Vandal kings were technically called "kings of the Vandals and the Alans," at least at first.

313. Prokopios' account of Basiliskos' expedition against the Vandals comes from the *History* of Priskos of Panion (*fr.* 53.3), possibly excluding only two sentences (3.6.3–4).

generosity to both soldiers and sailors, for he feared that, from a parsimonious policy, some obstacle might arise to hinder him in his desire to carry out his punishment of the barbarians. [2] Therefore, they say, thirteen hundred *kentenaria* were spent by him, all to no purpose. As it was not fated for the Vandals to be destroyed by this expedition, he placed Basiliskos in sole command, the brother of his wife Verina, a man who was extraordinarily desirous of imperial power, which he hoped would come to him without a struggle if he won the friendship of Aspar. [3] For Aspar himself, being an adherent of the Arian faith and having no intention of changing it, was unable to claim the imperial office, but he was easily strong enough to establish another in it, and it already seemed likely that he would plot against the emperor Leon, who had clashed with him.[314] [4] So they say that Aspar feared that if the Vandals were defeated Leon would establish his hold on the throne most securely, and so he repeatedly urged upon Basiliskos to spare the Vandals and Geiseric.

[5] Now before this time Leon had already appointed and sent Anthemius, a man *467–*
of the senate of great wealth and high birth, as emperor of the West to help him in the *472*
Vandalic war. [6] Yet Geiseric kept asking and earnestly entreating that the throne be given to Olybrius, who was married to Placidia, the daughter of Valentinian, and on account of his relationship was well-disposed toward him.[315] When he failed in this he was even more angry and kept plundering the whole land of the emperor. [7] Now there was in Dalmatia a certain Marcellianus,[316] one of the followers of Aetius and a man of repute, who, after Aetius had died in the manner told above,[317] no longer wanted to obey the emperor but began a rebellion and caused all the others under him to rebel too. So he held the power of Dalmatia himself, as no one dared to confront him. [8] The emperor Leon at that time won over this Marcellianus by successfully cultivating his favor, and instructed him to go to the island of Sardinia, which was then subject to
the Vandals. He drove out the Vandals and gained possession of it with no difficulty. *468*
[9] Herakleios was sent from Byzantion to Tripolis in Libya where, after defeating the Vandals there in battle, he easily captured the cities and, leaving his ships there, led his army on foot toward Carthage. Such, then, were the events that formed the prelude of the war.

[10] Basiliskos with his whole fleet put in at a town distant from Carthage no less than 280 stades (it so happened that a temple of Hermes had been there since ancient times, from which fact the place was named Mercurium; for this is what the Romans call Hermes). If he had not purposely handled matters badly and hesitated, but had immediately made an attempt on Carthage, he would have captured it at the first attack

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314. This sentence and the next comes from a different source (not Priskos), as shown by the sequential use of the two sources by Theophanes, *Chronographia* a.m. 5961 (p. 116).

315. Geiseric's son Huneric was married to Placidia's sister Eudocia.

316. Elsewhere called Marcellinus. He had rebelled in 454 after the murder of Aetius. He had previously driven the Vandals out of Sicily (in 460 or 465). In 468 he was in charge of the western armies and took Sardinia.

317. 3.4.27.

and would have reduced the Vandals to subjection without their even thinking of resistance. [11] So overcome was Geiseric with awe of Leon as an invincible emperor when the report was brought to him that Sardinia and Tripolis had been captured, and he saw the fleet of Basiliskos to be such as the Romans were said never to have had before. But as it was, the general's hesitation, whether due to cowardice or treachery, prevented this success. [12] Geiseric, enjoying the advantage of Basiliskos' negligence, did as follows. Arming all his subjects as best he could, he filled his ships, but some, the fastest ones, he kept empty of men, holding them in readiness. [13] Sending envoys to Basiliskos, he begged him to defer the war for the space of five days in order that he might take counsel in the meantime to do what the emperor especially desired him to do. [14] They say that he sent also a great amount of gold without the knowledge of the army of Basiliskos and thus purchased this armistice. [15] He did this, thinking, as actually happened, that a favorable wind would rise for him at this time. [16] Basiliskos, either as a favor to Aspar in accordance with what he had promised, or selling the moment of opportunity for money, or perhaps thinking it the better course, did as was requested and remained quietly in the camp, awaiting the moment favorable to the enemy. [17] But the Vandals, as soon as the wind had arisen for them which they had been expecting while they were at rest, raised their sails and, taking in tow the boats that, as was stated above, they had prepared with no men in them, sailed against the enemy. [18] When they came near, they set fire to the boats that they were towing, when their sails were bellied by the wind, and let them go against the Roman fleet. [19] As there was a great number of ships there, these boats easily spread fire wherever they struck, and were themselves readily destroyed together with those that they touched. [20] Thus the fire spread and the Roman fleet was thrown into confusion, as was only natural, and there was a great din that rivaled the noise caused by the wind and roaring of the flames, as the soldiers together with the sailors shouted orders to one another and pushed off the fire-boats with their poles and their own ships as well, which were being destroyed by one another in complete disorder. [21] Already the Vandals too were at hand ramming and sinking them, and plundered the soldiers attempting to escape of their arms. [22] But there were also some Romans who proved themselves brave men in this battle, most of all Ioannes, who was deputy-general under Basiliskos and had no share whatever in his treason. [23] Though a great throng had surrounded his ship, he kept killing very great numbers of the enemy by rushing from one side of the deck to the other and, when he perceived that the ship was being captured, he leaped with his whole equipment of arms from the deck into the sea. [24] Gento, the son of Geiseric, entreated him earnestly not to do this, offering pledges and holding out promises of safety; he nevertheless threw himself into the sea, saying only this, that Ioannes would never fall into the hands of dogs.[318] [25] So this war came to an end and Herakleios departed for home, for Marcellianus had been killed treacherously by one of his fellow officers. [26]

318. Malalas, *Chronicle* 14.44, tells this same story (more or less) of the general Damonikos, who did not have the name Ioannes (his full name is attested epigraphically). Malalas says that Damonikos was from Antioch, the chronicler's own city.

Basiliskos, coming to Byzantion, sat as a suppliant in the sanctuary of Christ the Great God (the people of Byzantion call this temple Sophia, considering that this designation is especially appropriate to God). By the intercession of Verina, the empress, he escaped this danger but was not able at that time to attain the throne, for the sake of which he had done everything. [27] For the emperor Leon not long after destroyed both Aspar
and Ardabourios in the palace when he suspected that they were plotting against his *11 Aug.*
life. Thus, then, did these events take place. *471*

7. Now Anthemius, the emperor of the West, died at the hand of his son-in-law *11 July*
Ricimer, and Olybrius, who succeeded to the throne, suffered the same fate a short *472*
time afterward. [2] When Leon also had died in Byzantion, the imperial office was *2 Nov.*
taken over by the younger Leon [II], the son of Zenon and Ariadne, the daughter of *472* *18 Jan.*
Leon [I], when he was still only a few days old.[319] [3] His father was chosen as partner *474*
in the imperial power, whereupon the child passed from the world. [4] Majorinus also *Nov.*
deserves mention, who had gained the power of the West before this time.[320] For this *474*
Majorinus, who surpassed in every virtue all who ever were emperors of the Romans, did not bear lightly the loss of Libya and collected a considerable army to use against
the Vandals; he came to Liguria, intending to lead the army himself against the enemy. *461*
[5] Majorinus never showed any hesitation before any task and least of all before the dangers of war. [6] But thinking it expedient for him to investigate first the strength of the Vandals and the character of Geiseric, and to discover whether the Moors and Libyans viewed the Romans with friendship or hostility, he decided to trust no eyes other than his own in such a matter. [7] So he set out as if an envoy from the emperor to Geiseric, assuming a fictitious name.[321] However, fearing that, if he was recognized, he would be harmed but also the enterprise would be hindered, he devised the following scheme. [8] The hair on his head was famous among men for being so blonde as to resemble pure gold, so he anointed it with a dye that was especially invented for this purpose and managed to change it for a while to a dark hue. [9] When he came before Geiseric, the latter attempted in many ways to intimidate him and, while treating him as a friend, took him into the building where all his weapons were stored, a numerous and impressive arsenal. [10] Thereupon they say that the weapons shook of their own accord and emitted a sound of no ordinary or casual sort, so that it seemed to Geiseric that there had been an earthquake, but when he got outside and made inquiries concerning it, no one else agreed with him and a great wonder, they say, came over him; still, he was not able to understand the meaning of what had happened. [11] Majorinus, having accomplished what he wanted, returned to Liguria and, leading his army on

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319. Leon II had actually been born in 467, and was seven when he died.

320. His name was Majorianus, but he reigned in 457–461, before Anthemius and Olybrius. Interestingly, Malalas, *Chronicle* 14.45, also places Majorianus after Olybrius, pointing to a possible common source, perhaps Eustathios of Epiphaneia.

321. The following story is almost certainly apocryphal.



Gold solidus of the emperor Basiliskos.

foot, came to the Pillars of Herakles, intending to cross the straits there and then march by land from there against Carthage. [12] When Geiseric became aware of this and also that he had been tricked by Majorinus in the embassy, he became alarmed and prepared for war. [13] The Romans, basing their confidence on the valor of Majorinus, already began to have fair hopes of recovering Libya for the empire. [14] But meanwhile
7 Aug. 461 Majorinus was attacked by the disease of dysentery and died,[322] a man who had shown himself moderate toward his subjects and an object of fear to his enemies. [15] Nepos too, upon taking over the empire, lived to enjoy it only a few days and died of disease,[323] and Glycerius after him entered into this office and suffered a similar fate.[324] After him Augustus assumed the imperial power. [16] There were, moreover, still other emperors in the West before this time, but though I know their names well I will not mention them. [17] For it so fell out that they lived only a short time after attaining the office, and as a result of this accomplished nothing worthy of mention. Such was the course of events in the West.

[18] As for Byzantion, Basiliskos, who was unable to beat down his lust for impe-
475–476 rial power, made an attempt to usurp the throne and succeeded without difficulty, as Zenon together with his wife sought refuge in Isauria, which was his native land. [19] While he held the tyranny for a year and eight months, he was detested by practically everyone and in particular by the soldiers of the court on account of the greatness of his avarice. [20] Zenon, perceiving this, collected an army and came against him. Basiliskos sent an army under the general Harmatos to face Zenon. [21] But when they had made camp near one another, Harmatos surrendered his army to Zenon on condition that he appoint as Caesar Harmatos' son Basiliskos, who was a young child, and leave him as successor to the throne upon his death. [22] And Basiliskos, deserted by all, fled for refuge to the same sanctuary as formerly.[325] Akakios, the priest of the city, turned him over

322. Actually, he was executed by Ricimer after the failure of the expedition against North Africa. The expedition failed because the Vandals destroyed the fleet in Spain that would have transported the Roman army to Mauretania.

323. Iulius Nepos was proclaimed emperor in Rome in June 474 and deposed in August 475 by Orestes; he fled to Dalmatia where he ruled until he was murdered on 9 May 480.

324. Actually, Glycerius (r. 473–474) was emperor right before Nepos, who deposed him. He became bishop of Salona in Dalmatia, the territory ruled by Nepos after he was expelled from Rome (see previous note).

325. 3.6.26.

to Zenon, charging him with impiety and with having brought great confusion and innovations into Christian doctrine, as he inclined toward the heresy of Eutyches.[326] And this was so. [23] After Zenon had thus taken over the empire a second time, he carried out his pledge to Harmatos formally by appointing his son Basiliskos Caesar, but not long afterward he both stripped him of the office and put Harmatos to death. [24] He sent Basiliskos with his children and his wife to Kappadokia in the winter, *477/478* commanding that they should not be given food, clothes, or any kind of care. [25] And there, being hard-pressed by the cold and hunger, they took refuge with one another and, embracing their loved ones, perished. And this punishment overtook Basiliskos for the policies that he had pursued. These things, however, happened at a later time.

[26] Geiseric was then plundering the whole Roman realm just as much as before, if not more, circumventing his enemies by deceit and driving them out of their possessions by force, as has been previously said, and he continued to do so until the emperor Zenon came to an agreement with him and an endless peace was established between them, by which it was provided that the Vandals would never again perform any hostile *474 or 476* act against the Romans nor would the latter do the same against them.[327] This peace was preserved by Zenon himself and by his successor in the empire, Anastasios. [27] It remained in force under the emperor Justin. But Justinian, who was the nephew of Justin, succeeded him in the imperial power. [28] It was in the reign of this Justinian that this war came to pass, in the manner that will be told in the following narrative. [29] Geiseric, after living on a short time, died at an advanced age, having made a will *25 Jan. 477* in which he enjoined many things upon the Vandals and in particular that the royal power among them should always fall to that one who was first in years among all the male offspring descended from Geiseric himself. [30] So Geiseric, having ruled over the Vandals thirty-nine years from the capture of Carthage, died, as I have said.

8. Huneric, the eldest of his sons, then succeeded to the throne, as Gento had already departed from the world. During the time when Huneric ruled the Vandals they had no war against anyone, except the Moors. [2] For through fear of Geiseric the Moors had remained quiet before that time, but as soon as he was out of their way they both did much harm to the Vandals and suffered the same themselves. [3] Huneric also showed himself to be the most cruel and unjust of all men toward the Christians in Libya.[328] [4] He forced them to convert to the Arian faith and those who he saw were not yielding to him willingly he burned or destroyed by other forms of execution. He also cut out the tongues of many from the very throat, who even up to my time were going about

326. Eutyches was a vocal monk of the mid-fifth century whose theological position was identified as Monophysitism by its opponents. Basiliskos tried to repeal the Council of Chalkedon (451) and gain Monophysite support.

327. The signing of the treaty was discussed in detail in the *History* of Malchos (*fr.* 5). It also involved the return of the exiled Catholic bishops (Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution* 1.51).

328. An account of these atrocities can be found in Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution*.

in Byzantion speaking without impairment and feeling no effect from this punishment. But two of them, when they decided to visit some prostitutes, were henceforth rendered *23 Dec. 484* unable to speak.[329] [5] After ruling the Vandals for eight years he died of disease. By that time the Moors who dwelled on the Aurès mountains had revolted from the Vandals and were independent (these Aurès are mountains in Numidia, about thirteen days' journey distant from Carthage to the south). Indeed, they never came under the Vandals again, as the latter were unable to carry on a war against the Moors on such an inaccessible and extremely steep mountain.

485 [6] When Huneric died the rule of the Vandals fell to Gunthamund, the son of Gento, the son of Geiseric; for he, in point of years, was the first of the offspring of Geiseric. [7] This Gunthamund fought many battles against the Moors and subjected the Christians to still greater suffering; he died of disease, being at about the middle *3 Sept. 496* of the twelfth year of his reign. [8] His brother Thrasamund took over the kingdom, a good-looking man especially gifted with discretion and high-mindedness. [9] However, he continued to force the Christians to change their ancestral faith, not by torturing their bodies as his predecessors had done but by seeking to win them with honors and offices and presenting them with great sums of money; in the case of those who would not be persuaded, he pretended that he had no idea who they were. [10] If he caught any who were guilty of great crimes that they committed either by accident or deliberately, he would offer such men, as a reward for changing their faith, that they not be punished for their offenses. [11] When his wife died without producing either male or female offspring, wishing to establish his rule as securely as possible, he sent to Theoderic, the king of the Goths, asking to receive his sister Amalafrida as wife, for her *ca. 500* husband had just died. [12] Theoderic sent him not only his sister but also a thousand noble Goths as a bodyguard, who were followed also by a host of attendants amounting to about five thousand fighting men. [13] Theoderic also presented his sister with one of the promontories of Sicily, which are [three] in number, specifically the one they call Lilybaeum, and as a result of this Thrasamund was accounted the strongest and most powerful of all who had ruled the Vandals. [14] He became also a close friend of the emperor Anastasios. It was during the reign of Thrasamund that the Vandals happened to suffer a disaster at the hands of the Moors such as had never befallen them before that time.[330]

[15] There was a certain Kabaon ruling the Moors by Tripolis, a man experienced in many wars and extremely shrewd. This Kabaon, when he learned that the Vandals were marching against him, did as follows. [16] First he ordered his subjects to abstain from all injustice, all food that promotes luxury, and especially from sex with women. Setting up two palisaded enclosures, he encamped himself with all the men in one and in the other he shut the women, threatening that death would be the penalty if anyone

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329. The miracle of the tongueless confessors who could still speak is mentioned in many contemporary sources, but only Prokopios adds the bit about the prostitutes who rendered them speechless.

330. The following campaign cannot be dated within the reign of Thrasamund (r. 496–523).

went to the women's palisade. [17] Then he sent spies to Carthage with the following instructions: whenever the Vandals, in setting out on the expedition, offered insult to any temple that the Christians reverence, they were to observe what transpired and, when the Vandals had passed the place, they were then to do the opposite of everything they had done to the sanctuary before their departure. [18] They say that he added this also, that he was ignorant of the God whom the Christians worshipped but it was likely that if he was powerful, as he was said to be, he would punish those who insulted him and defend those who honored him. [19] So the spies came to Carthage and waited quietly, observing the Vandals' preparation. When the army set out on the march to Tripolis, they followed, clothing themselves in humble garb. [20] The Vandals, upon making camp the first day, led their horses and other animals into the temples of the Christians and, sparing no insult, acted with all the unrestrained lawlessness natural to them, beating as many priests as they caught, lashing them with many blows to the back, and commanding them to act as servants to the Vandals in matters that they were accustomed to assign to the most dishonored of their servants. [21] As soon as they had departed from there, the spies of Kabaon did as they had been instructed: they immediately cleansed the sanctuaries and took away with great care the filth and whatever other unholy thing lay in them; they lighted all the lamps and bowed down before the priests with great reverence and treated them with all kindness. [22] After giving pieces of silver to the poor who sat about these sanctuaries, they followed the army of the Vandals. [23] From then on along the whole route the Vandals continued to commit the same offenses and the spies to render the same service. [24] When they were coming near the Moors, the spies overtook them and reported to Kabaon what had been done by the Vandals and by themselves to the temples of the Christians, and that the enemy were somewhere nearby. [25] Upon learning this, Kabaon arranged for the battle as follows. He marked off a circle in the plain where he was about to make his palisade, and placed his camels turned sideways in a circle as a protection for the camp, making his line facing the enemy about twelve camels deep. [26] He placed the women, children, and all who were unfit for fighting together with their possessions in the middle, while he commanded his army of fighting men to stand between the legs of those animals, protected by their shields.[331] [27] As the phalanx of the Moors was of such a sort, the Vandals were at a loss how to handle the situation, for they were neither good with the javelin nor with the bow, nor did they know how to go into battle on foot, but they were all horsemen who used spears and swords for the most part, so that they were unable to do the enemy any harm at a distance. Their horses, moreover, were annoyed at the sight of the camels and refused absolutely to be driven against the enemy.[332] [28] As the Moors, by hurling javelins in great numbers at them from their safe position, kept killing both their horses and men without difficulty, because they were a vast throng, they began to flee and, when the Moors pursued, most of them were killed while some fell into the

331. Cf. 4.11.17.

332. Cf. the Lydian horses in Herodotos, *Histories* 1.80.

hands of the enemy. An extremely small number from this army returned home. [29] Such was the fortune which Thrasamund suffered at the hands of the Moors. He died at a later time, having ruled the Vandals for twenty-seven years.

6 May 523

9. Hilderic, the son of Huneric, the son of Geiseric, next received the kingdom, a ruler who was easily approached by his subjects and altogether gentle. He was harsh neither to the Christians nor to anyone else, but in war he was soft and did not even want to hear about it. [2] So Hoamer, his nephew and an able warrior, led the armies against any with whom the Vandals were at war; they called him the Achilles of the Vandals. [3] During the reign of this Hilderic the Vandals were defeated in Byzacium by the Moors, who were ruled by Antalas,[333] and it so fell out that they became enemies instead of allies and friends to Theoderic and the Goths in Italy. [4] For they put Amalafrida in prison and killed all the Goths, accusing them of subversive designs against the Vandals and Hilderic. [5] However, no revenge came from Theoderic, for he considered himself unable to gather a great fleet and campaign to Libya, and Hilderic was a close friend and ally of Justinian, who had not yet come to the throne but was governing its affairs with full power, for his uncle Justin, who was emperor, was very old and not altogether experienced in matters of state. Hilderic and Justinian sent large gifts of money to each other.

[6] Now there was a certain man in the family of Geiseric, Gelimer, the son of Geilaris, the son of Gento, the son of Geiseric, who was of such an age as to be second only to Hilderic and for this reason was expected to take over the kingdom very soon. [7] This man was held to be the best warrior of his time, but otherwise he was harsh and malicious and an expert in undertaking subversive plots and laying hold of the money of others. [8] Now this Gelimer, when he saw power coming to him, was unable to live by the established rules[334] but appropriated the functions of a king and trespassed on that office, although it was not yet due him. Hilderic was tolerant and indulged him, but he was no longer able to restrain his thoughts: associating with himself all the noblest Vandals, he persuaded them to strip the kingdom from Hilderic as being an unwarlike king who had been defeated by the Moors and had betrayed the power of the Vandals to the emperor Justin in order that the kingdom might not come to him, because he was of the other branch of the family; for he asserted slanderously that this was the meaning of Hilderic's embassy to Byzantion, and that he was handing the power of the Vandals over to Justin. They were persuaded and carried out this plan. [9]

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333. The Vandal defeat in 530 by Antalas (later a Roman ally) precipitated the fall of Hilderic and accession of Gelimer. Antalas' career is told by Corippus, *Iohannis*, book 3 (for this battle, see 3.262–276). Malalas gives a different version that smacks of Justinianic propaganda (*Chronicle* 18.57): Hilderic and Gelimer defeated the Moors, but Gelimer then made an alliance with them to depose Hilderic. The aim of this version was probably to undermine Gelimer's claim that Hilderic was deposed because of his defeat (see 3.9.8 below). Malalas is known to have used official notices to compile his chronicle.

334. For the expression, see Thucydides, *History* 1.130.

Thus Gelimer seized power and imprisoned Hilderic, who was starting the seventh year of his reign over the Vandals, and also Hoamer and his brother Euagees. *May 530*

[10] But when Justinian heard these things, having already received the imperial power, he sent envoys to Gelimer in Libya with the following letter:[335]

> *Justinian to Gelimer*
>
> You are not acting in a holy manner nor according to the will of Geiseric, keeping in prison an old man who is kinsman and the king of the Vandals—if the decrees of Geiseric are to be valid—and robbing him of his office by violence, although it would be possible for you to receive it shortly in a lawful manner. [11] Do no further wrong and do not exchange the name of king for the appellation of tyrant, which comes but a short time in advance. [12] But as for this man, whose death may be expected at any moment, allow him to bear in appearance the form of royal power while you do all the things that it is proper for a king to do. Wait until you can receive the actual name of the thing from time and the law of Geiseric, and from them alone. [13] For if you do this, God will be favorable to you and our relations with you will be friendly.

[14] Such was his message. But Gelimer sent the envoys away with nothing accomplished, and he blinded Hoamer and also kept Hilderic and Euagees in closer confinement, charging them with planning to escape to Byzantion. [15] When this too was heard by the emperor Justinian, he sent envoys a second time and wrote as follows:

> *Justinian to Gelimer*
>
> We supposed that you would never go contrary to our advice when we wrote you the previous letter. [16] But as it pleases you to have secured possession of the royal power in the way you have taken and now hold it, then enjoy from it whatever that Power of Good or Evil grants.[336] [17] But do send to us Hilderic, and Hoamer whom you have blinded, and his brother, to receive what consolation they can who have been robbed of their kingdom or their sight. [18] We will not let the matter rest if you do not do this. We are driven by the hope that we had based on our friendship. [19] The treaty with Geiseric will not stand in our way. For we come not to make war upon him who has succeeded to his kingdom, but as his avengers, to the extent that it is in our power.

[20] When Gelimer read this, he replied as follows:

> *Gelimer to Justinian*
>
> King Gelimer to the emperor Justinian. Neither did I take the office by force nor has anything unholy been done by me to my kinsmen. [21] For Hilderic, while planning to subvert the house of Geiseric, was dethroned by the nation of the Vandals; and I was called to the kingdom by my years, which gave me the seniority, according to the law. [22] In general, it is good for one to administer

335. Justinian also asked the Gothic king Athalaric not to recognize Gelimer (Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.57).

336. *Daimon* can mean God but also a malevolent power. Prokopios has Justinian invoke it ambiguously here, in accordance with the linked "demonology" of the *Wars* and *Secret History*, in which Justinian himself assumes the role of an Evil Daimon, for Gelimer especially.

> the state that belongs to him and not to concern himself with those of others. [23] So it is not just for you, who have a kingdom, to meddle in another's affairs. If you break the treaty and come against us, we will oppose you with all our power, calling to witness the oaths sworn by Zenon,[337] from whom you have received the kingdom which you hold.

[24] The emperor Justinian was angry with Gelimer even before then, but when he received this letter he was even more incited to punish him. [25] It seemed to him best to put an end to the Mede War as quickly as possible and then to campaign against Libya. As he was quick to form a plan and tireless in carrying out his decisions,[338]
531 Belisarios, the general of the East, was summoned and came to him immediately, not because it had been announced to him or anyone else that he was about to lead an army against Libya, but it was given out that he had been removed from the office he held.[339]
summer 532 [26] The treaty with Persia was duly made, as was told in the previous books.[340]

10. When the emperor Justinian decided that the situation at home and with the Persians was as favorable as possible, he deliberated regarding the situation in Libya. [2] But when he disclosed to the magistrates that he was gathering an army against the Vandals and Gelimer, most of them reacted negatively and lamented it as a misfortune, recalling the expedition of the emperor Leon and the disaster of Basiliskos, and reciting how many soldiers had perished and how much money the public treasury had lost. [3] But the men who were the most sorrowful of all and who, by reason of their anxiety, felt the keenest apprehension, were the praetorian prefect, whom the Romans call *praetor*, also the administrator of the treasury, and all to whom had been assigned the collection of either public or imperial taxes, for they reasoned that while it would be necessary for them to produce countless sums for the needs of the war, they would be granted neither flexibility nor any extensions. [4] Every one of the generals, supposing that he himself would command the army, was in terror and dread at the greatness of the danger, if it should be necessary for him—assuming he survived the perils of the sea—to encamp in enemy land and, using his ships as a base, to engage in a war against a kingdom both large and formidable. [5] The soldiers, also, who recently returned from a long, hard war and had not yet tasted to the full the blessings of home, were in despair, because they were being led into a naval expedition, a thing that they were ignorant about even through hearsay, and because they would be sent from the eastern frontier to the west

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337. 3.7.26.

338. An allusion to the image of the Athenians in the Corinthians' hostile speech in Thucydides, *History* 1.70.2, which here also alludes to *Secret History* 8.26, where the same phrase is used in a more overtly negative way (cf. also 13.33 and *Wars* 2.2.6).

339. Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.61, reports that Belisarios was deposed from his command following an official inquiry into the battle of Kallinikon (19 April 531; see 1.18). Prokopios is here defending Belisarios.

340. 1.22.16.

in order to risk their lives against Vandals and Moors. [6] But all the rest, as usually happens in large crowds, wished to be spectators of new adventures while others faced the dangers.

[7] But no one dared to say anything to the emperor to prevent the expedition, except Ioannes the Kappadokian, the praetorian prefect, the most impudent and shrewd man of his time. [8] While the rest were bewailing in silence the fortune that was upon them, this Ioannes came before the emperor and spoke as follows:[341]

Ioannes the Kappadokian to Justinian

> O emperor, the good faith that you show in dealing with your subjects enables us to speak frankly regarding anything that will be of advantage to your regime, even though our words and deeds may not be to your liking.[342] [9] For thus does your wisdom temper your authority with justice, in that you do not consider that man only as loyal to you who serves you under any and all conditions, nor are you angry with the man who speaks against you, but by weighing all things by pure reason alone you have often shown that it entails no danger for us to oppose your purposes. [10] Led by these considerations, O emperor, I have come to offer this advice, knowing that, although I will perhaps give offense at the moment, if it so chance, yet in the future the loyalty that I bear to you will be made clear, and that for this I will be able to bring you as witness. [11] For if, by not trusting in my words, you carry out the war against the Vandals, it will come about that, if the struggle is prolonged for you, my advice will be praised. [12] If you are confident that you will conquer the enemy, it is not at all unreasonable for you to sacrifice the lives of men, expend a vast amount of treasure, and undergo the difficulties of the struggle; for victory, coming at the end, covers up all the calamities of war. [13] But if in reality these things lie on the knees of God, and it is necessary for us to fear the outcome of war by considering the example of what has happened before, how is it not better to love peace more than the dangers of strife? [14] You propose to make an expedition against Carthage, to which, if one goes by land, the journey is one of 140 days, while if one goes by sea, he is forced to cross the whole open sea and go to its very end. So that he who brings you news of what is happening with the army will reach you a year after the event. [15] One might add that if you are victorious over the enemy, you cannot take possession of Libya while Sicily and Italy lie in the hands of others. [16] But if you should stumble, O emperor, having already broken the treaty, you will draw the danger to our own land. In fact, putting all in a word, it will not be possible for you to reap the fruits of victory, and at the same time any reversal of chance will harm what is already well established. [17] Good planning is beneficial if it occurs before events are set into motion. For when men have

341. Ioannes' speech is based on that by Artabanos in Herodotos, *Histories* 7.10, with elements taken also from Nikias' speech against the Sicilian expedition in Thucydides, *History* 6.9–14; the surrounding narrative of Justinian's decision to attack the Vandals is based generally on the narrative of Xerxes' decision to invade Greece.

342. Cf. the Corinthians in Thucydides, *History* 1.68.

failed, regret is pointless, but before disaster comes there is no danger in altering plans. Therefore it would be advantageous above all else to make fitting use of the decisive moment.

[18] That is what Ioannes said. The emperor Justinian took his point and reined in his eager desire for the war. But one of the priests whom they call bishops, who had come from the East, said that he wished to have a word with the emperor. [19] When he met him, he said that God had visited him in a dream and told him to go to the emperor and rebuke him because, after undertaking the task of protecting the Christians in Libya from tyrants, he had for no good reason become afraid. [20] "And yet," he said, "I will myself join with him in waging war and make him the master of Libya."[343] [21] When the emperor heard this, he was no longer able to hold back and began to collect the army and the ships, preparing supplies of weapons and food, and he announced to Belisarios that he should be in readiness, because he was very soon to act as general in Libya. [22] Meanwhile, Pudentius, one of the natives of Tripolis in Libya, caused this place to revolt from the Vandals and, sending to the emperor, he begged him to send him an army, [23] for he could win the land for him with no trouble. Justinian sent him Tattimuth and a small army. [24] Pudentius joined this force with his own and, as the Vandals were absent, gained possession of the land and made it subject to the emperor. Gelimer wanted to punish Pudentius, but found the following obstacle in his way.

[25] There was a certain Goda among the slaves of Gelimer, a Goth by birth, a passionate and energetic man who had great bodily strength and seemed to be loyal to the interests of his master. [26] To this Goda Gelimer entrusted the island of Sardinia, in order both to guard the island and to pay over the annual tribute. [27] But he could not digest the prosperity brought to him by fortune nor had the heart to endure it, and so he undertook to establish a tyranny, refusing to continue the payment of the tribute and actually detaching the island from the Vandals and holding it for himself. [28] When he perceived that the emperor Justinian was about to make war against Libya and Gelimer, he wrote to him as follows:

Goda to Justinian

[29] It was neither because I am ungrateful nor because I suffered anything unpleasant at my master's hands that I turned to rebellion, but seeing the vicious cruelty of the man toward both his kinsmen and subjects, I was unwilling to be seen as sharing in his inhumanity. [30] It is better to serve a just king than a

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343. Victor of Tonnena, *Chronicle* s.a. 534, says that the North African martyr Laetus appeared in a dream to Justinian and persuaded him to launch the expedition. Kyrillos of Skythopolis, writing in the 550s, made his saintly hero, Sabas, predict to Justinian during a visit to the court in 530 that God would give him Africa, Rome, and the whole of Honorius' former empire if he supported their projects in Palestine (*Life of Sabas* 175–78). Justinian later claimed that he began the war "on behalf of Orthodoxy and the liberation of our subjects" (*Novel* 78.4.1; of 539). Eastern merchants may have also incited Justinian (*Wars* 3.20.15) and there was a lobby in Constantinople agitating on behalf of the deposed Hilderic (4.5.8). Pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.17b, claims that North African notables at odds with Gelimer spurred the emperor on.

> tyrant whose commands are unlawful. [31] You should join in my effort and send soldiers so that I may be able to defend against assailants.

[32] The emperor received this letter gladly and sent Eulogios as envoy, writing a letter praising Goda for his wisdom and zeal for justice, and he promised an alliance, soldiers, and a general who would be able to guard the island with him and assist him in every other way, so that no trouble should come to him from the Vandals. [33] But Eulogios, upon coming to Sardinia, found that Goda was assuming the name and wearing the dress of a king and that he had a bodyguard. [34] When Goda read the emperor's letter, he said that it was his wish to have soldiers, indeed, to come as his allies, but he had absolutely no need for a commander. Having written to the emperor in this sense, he dismissed Eulogios.

11. The emperor, meanwhile, before he learned this, was preparing four hundred soldiers with Kyrillos as commander to assist Goda in guarding the island. [2] With them he was also preparing the expedition against Carthage, ten thousand foot soldiers and five thousand horsemen, gathered from the regular armies and the *foederati*. [3] At an earlier time only barbarians were enlisted among the *foederati*, namely those who had come into the Roman polity not as slaves, for they had not been conquered by the Romans, but on the basis of complete equality. [4] For the Romans call treaties with their enemies *foedera*. But now there is nothing to prevent anyone from assuming this name, as the passage of time hardly maintains names attached to the things to which they were formerly applied, but conditions are ever changing according to the desire of men who direct them, who care little for the meaning originally attached to a name. [5] The commanders of the *foederati* were Dorotheos, the general of the armies in Armenia, and Solomon, who was acting as manager for the general Belisarios (such a person the Romans call *domesticus*). [6] This Solomon was a eunuch, but it was not by the intent of any man that his genitals had been severed: some accident imposed this lot upon him while he was in swaddling clothes. There were also Kyprianos, Valerianos, Martinos, Althias, Ioannes, Markellos, and the Kyrillos whom I mentioned above. [7] In charge of the cavalry were Rouphinos and Aïgan, who were of the household of Belisarios, as well as Barbatos and Pappos, while the infantry was commanded by Theodoros, whom they also called Kteanos, and Terentios, Zaïdos, Markianos, and Sarapis. [8] One Ioannes, a native of Epidamnos which is now called Dyrrachion, held supreme command over all the leaders of infantry. [9] Among all these commanders Solomon was from a place in the east, at the very extremity of the Roman domain, where the city called Daras now stands; Aïgan was by birth of the Massagetai whom they now call Huns; [10] and the rest were almost all inhabitants of the land of Thrace. [11] There followed with them also four hundred Heruls, whom Fara led, and about six hundred barbarian allies from the nation of the Massagetai, all mounted archers; [12] these were led by Sinnion and Balas, men endowed with bravery and endurance to the highest degree. [13] Five hundred ships were required for the whole force, not one had a capacity greater than fifty thousand *medimnoi*, nor any one less than three thousand. [14] In all the vessels

together there were thirty thousand sailors, Egyptians and Ionians for the most part, and Kilikians, and one commander was appointed over all the ships, Kalonymos of Alexandria. [15] They had also long-ships prepared for sea-fighting to the number of ninety-two, and these were single-banked ships covered by decks, in order that the men rowing them not be exposed to enemy missiles. [16] These boats are called dromons by men of the present time, for they are able to attain a great speed. In these sailed two thousand men of Byzantion, who were all rowers as well as fighting men, for there was not a single superfluous man among them.[344] [17] Archelaos was also sent, a man of patrician rank who had already been praetorian prefect both in Byzantion and Illyria, but he then held the position of prefect of the army; for thus is designated the officer charged with the army's expenses. [18] As general with supreme authority over all the emperor sent Belisarios, who was again in command of the eastern armies. [19] He was followed by many of his own spearmen and many retainers too, men who were capable warriors and thoroughly experienced in the dangers of fighting. [20] And the emperor gave him written instructions to do everything as seemed best to him, confirming that his acts would be valid as if the emperor himself had done them. The letter, in fact, gave him the authority of an emperor. [21] Now Belisarios was a native of Germania, which lies between Thrace and Illyria. These things, then, took place in this way.

[22] Gelimer, however, being deprived of Tripolis by Pudentius and of Sardinia by Goda, scarcely hoped to regain Tripolis, as it was situated at a great distance and the Romans were already assisting the rebels, against whom at that moment it seemed to him best not to take the field; but he was eager to get to the island before any army sent by the emperor to join his enemies arrived there. [23] He thus selected five thousand of the Vandals and 120 ships of the fastest kind and, appointing as general his brother Tzazo, sent them off. [24] They were sailing with great enthusiasm and eagerness against Goda and Sardinia. In the meantime, the emperor Justinian was sending off Valerianos and Martinos in advance of the others in order to await the rest of the army in the Peloponnese. [25] When these two had embarked upon their ships, the emperor remembered that there were some orders that he wanted to enjoin upon them, which he had wished to say previously but his preoccupation with other matters had driven it out of his mind. [26] He summoned them, accordingly, intending to say what he wished, but upon reconsidering the matter he found that it would not be propitious for them to interrupt their journey. [27] He therefore sent men to forbid them either to return to him or to disembark from their ships. [28] These men, upon coming near the ships, commanded them with much shouting and loud cries by no means to turn back, and it seemed to those present that the thing which had happened was no good omen and that no one in those ships would ever return from Libya to Byzantion. [29] For besides the omen they suspected that a curse had also been laid upon the men by the emperor, although not by his own will, so that they would not return. Now if one

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344. This is among the first references to the dromons, the Byzantine "runners." But two thousand rowers to ninety-two ships produces far too low a ratio of under twenty men per ship. Perhaps one of these figures is corrupt.

were to so interpret the incident with regard to these two commanders, Valerianos and Martinos, he would find the original opinion untrue. [30] But there was a certain man among the retainers of Martinos, a Stotzas by name, who was destined to be an enemy of the emperor, to attempt to set up a tyranny, and by no means to return to Byzantion, and one could suppose that curse to have been turned upon him by the Evil Power. [31] But whether this matter stands thus or otherwise, I leave to each to rationalize it as he wishes. I come now to tell how the general Belisarios and the army departed.

12. In the seventh year that Justinian held imperial power, at about the spring equinox, *533*
the emperor commanded the general's ship to anchor off the point that is before the royal palace. [2] Epiphanios, the chief priest of the city, came there and, after uttering an appropriate prayer, put on the ships one of the soldiers who had recently been baptized and taken on the Christian name.[345] After this the general Belisarios and Antonina, his wife, set sail. [3] Prokopios was also with them, who wrote this history. Previously he had been extremely terrified at the danger, but later he had seen a vision in his sleep that caused him to take heart and made him eager to go on the expedition. [4] It seemed in the dream that he was in the house of Belisarios, and one of the servants entered and announced that some men had come bearing gifts. Belisarios instructed him to investigate what sort of gifts they were, and he went out into the court and saw men who were carrying earth with flowers on their shoulders. [5] He directed him to bring these men into the house and deposit the earth they were carrying in the portico; and Belisarios together with his guardsmen came there, and he himself reclined on that earth and ate the flowers, urging the others to do likewise; and as they reclined and ate, as if on a couch, the food seemed to them extremely sweet. Such, then, was the vision of the dream.[346]

[6] The whole fleet followed the general's ship and they put in at Perinthos, now called Herakleia, where the army spent five days, as at that place the general received as a present from the emperor a great number of horses from the imperial pastures, which are kept for him in the territory of Thrace. [7] Setting sail from there, they anchored off Abydos and it came about, as they were delayed there for four days because of the lack of wind, that the following took place. [8] Two Massagetai killed one of their comrades who was ridiculing them in the midst of their intemperate drinking; for they were drunk. Of all men the Massagetai are the heaviest drinkers. [9] Belisarios immediately impaled the two men on the hill by Abydos. [10] The relatives of these two, along with other men, were angry and declared that they had not entered into an alliance in order

345. It is likely that this was Theodosios, a former Eunomian, adopted at this time by Belisarios and subsequently seduced by his new stepmother, Belisarios' wife Antonina (mentioned in the next sentence); *Secret History* 1.15 ff.

346. The dream may have a hidden negative implication: the image points to the Lotus Eaters, from whose land—in Libya!—no one returns (Homer, *Odyssey* 9.80–102; cf. *Wars* 3.11.28–29; *Secret History* 18.8). The image also points to the "eating" of North Africa (*Wars* 3.18.17–18, 3.21.1–6, and *Secret History* 18.9). For another good (but ambiguous) omen before the Libyan expedition, see 7.35.3–8.

to be punished nor to be subject to the laws of the Romans (for their own laws did not set such punishments for murder); and as they were joined in voicing the accusation against the general even by Roman soldiers, who were anxious that there should be no punishment for their offenses, Belisarios called together both the Massagetai and the rest of the army and spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman army

[11] If my words were addressed to men who are now for the first time entering into war, it would require a long speech for me to convince you how great an asset justice is for gaining victory. [12] Those who do not understand the fortunes of such struggles think that the outcome of war lies in one's hands. [13] But you, who have often conquered an enemy not inferior to you in strength of body and well-endowed with valor, and who have experience fighting an enemy, you, I think, are not ignorant that, while it is men who always do the fighting in either army, it is God who judges the contest however seems best to him and who bestows the victory in war. [14] Given that this is so, it is right to pay less attention to bodily fitness, practice in arms, and all the other provision for war, than to justice and those things that pertain to God. [15] For that which may bring the greatest advantage to men in need would naturally be honored by them above all other things. [16] The first sign of justice would be the punishment of those who have committed unjust murder. For if it is incumbent upon us to judge the actions that are committed toward one's neighbors, and to name the just and the unjust ones, we find that nothing is more precious to a man than his life. [17] If some barbarian who has slain his kinsman expects leniency in his trial because he was drunk, he actually makes the charge so much worse by reason of the very excuse that, he claims, removes his guilt.[347] [18] For it is not right for a man under any circumstances, and especially when serving in an army, to be so drunk as to readily kill his best friends; rather, the drunkenness itself, even if the murder is not added at all, is worthy of punishment, and when it is a kinsman who is wronged, the crime is all the worse with regard to punishment than when committed against those who are not kinsmen, at least for men of sense. [19] Now the example is before you and you may see what sort of outcome such actions have. [20] As for you, it is your duty to avoid initiating violent exchanges or taking the possessions of others, for I will not overlook it, be assured, and I will not consider anyone of you a fellow soldier of mine, even if he is reputed to be terrible to the foe, who is not able to bring pure hands against the enemy. [21] Bravery cannot prevail unless it is arrayed with justice.

[22] So spoke Belisarios. And the whole army, hearing his words and looking up at the two impaled men, felt an overwhelming fear and considered how to conduct their lives with prudence, for they saw that they would not be free from great danger if they were caught doing anything unlawful.

13. After this Belisarios' concern was how to keep his whole fleet together at all times as it sailed and to find harbor in the same place. [2] For he knew that in a large fleet, and

347. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.5.

especially if rough winds blew against them, it was inevitable that many of the ships would be left behind and scattered at sea, and that their captains would not know which of the ships that put to sea ahead of them it was better to follow. [3] So after considering the matter, he did as follows. The sails of the three ships in which he and his retinue were carried he painted red from the upper corner for about one-third of their length, and he erected upright poles on the prow of each and hung lights from them, so that both by day and night the general's ships would be conspicuous; then he commanded all the captains to follow these ships. [4] Thus with the three ships leading the whole fleet not a single one was left behind. Whenever they were about to put out from a harbor, the trumpets announced this to them.

[5] Setting out from Abydos, they met with strong winds that carried them to Sigeion. Again in calm weather they proceeded more leisurely to Malea, where the calm proved of the greatest advantage to them. [6] For since they had a great fleet and very large ships, as night came on everything was thrown into confusion by reason of their being crowded into a small space, and they were brought into extreme peril. [7] At that time both the captains and the rest of the sailors showed their quality, for while shouting loudly and making a great noise they kept pushing the ships apart with their poles and cleverly kept the distances from each other. If a wind had arisen, whether a following or a headwind, it seems to me that the sailors would hardly have saved themselves and their ships. [8] But as it was, they escaped, as I said, and put in at Tainaron, now called Kainoupolis. [9] Pressing on from there, they touched at Methone and found Valerianos and Martinos with their men, who had reached the same place a short time before. [10] As there were no winds blowing, Belisarios anchored the ships there and disembarked the whole army. After they had disembarked, he assigned the commanders their positions and drew up the soldiers. [11] While he was thus engaged and no wind at all arose, it came about that many of the soldiers died by disease caused in the following manner.

[12] The praetorian prefect, Ioannes, was a crooked character and so skillful at devising ways of bringing money into the public treasury to the detriment of men that I, for my part, would never be able to describe him sufficiently. [13] But this has been said in the preceding books, when I was brought to that point by my narrative.[348] [14] I will explain here how he destroyed the soldiers. [15] The bread that soldiers are assigned to eat in camp must necessarily be put twice into the oven and be cooked so carefully as to last for a very long time and not spoil in a short time, and loaves cooked in this way necessarily weigh less. For this reason, when such bread is distributed the soldiers generally receive as their portion one-fourth more than the usual weight. [16] Ioannes, therefore, calculating how he might reduce the amount of firewood used and have less to pay to the bakers in wages, and also how he might not lose in the weight of the bread, brought the still uncooked dough to the public baths of Achilles, underneath which

348. 1.24.12–15, 1.25.8–10. A detailed account of Ioannes' crimes and vices is given by Ioannes Lydos, *On the Magistracies* 3.57–72.

the fire is kept burning, and instructed his men to set it down there. [17] When it only seemed to be cooked in some fashion or other, he threw it into bags, put it on the ships, and sent it off. [18] When the fleet arrived at Methone, the loaves disintegrated and reverted to flour, not wholesome flour, however, but rotten, moldy, and already giving out a heavy odor. [19] The loaves were dispensed by measure to the soldiers by those to whom this office was assigned, and they made the distribution of the bread by *choinix* and *medimnos*. [20] Feeding upon this in the summertime in a place where the climate is very hot, the soldiers became sick and not fewer than five hundred of them died. This would have happened to more, but Belisarios prevented it by ordering the bread of the country there to be furnished to them. Reporting the matter to the emperor, he himself gained in favor, but he did not at that time bring any punishment upon Ioannes.

[21] These events, then, took place in the manner described. And setting out from Methone they reached the harbor of Zakynthos, where they took in enough water to last them in crossing the Adriatic Sea and, after making all their other preparations, sailed on. [22] But as the wind they had was gentle and languid, it was only on the sixteenth day that they came to land at a deserted place in Sicily near where Mount Aetna rises. [23] While they were being delayed in this passage, as I said, it so happened that the water of the whole fleet was spoiled, except that which Belisarios himself and his table-companions were drinking. [24] For this alone was preserved by the wife of Belisarios in the following manner. She filled with water jars made of glass and constructed a small room with planks in the hold of the ship where it was impossible for the sun to penetrate, and there she sank the jars in sand, and by this means the water remained unaffected. So much, then, for this.

14. As soon as Belisarios had disembarked upon the island, he began to feel restless, not knowing how to proceed, and his mind was tormented by the thought that he did not know what sort of men the Vandals were against whom he was going, and how strong they were in war, or in what manner the Romans would have to wage the war, or what place would be their base of operations. [2] Most of all he was disturbed by the soldiers, who were in mortal dread of sea-fighting and had no shame in saying beforehand that, if they disembarked on the land, they would try to show themselves brave men in the battle but, if hostile ships came against them, they would turn to flee; for, they said, they were not able to fight against both men and the water. [3] Being at a loss, then, because of all these things, he sent Prokopios, his adviser, to Syracuse, to find out whether the enemy had set any ambushes to keep watch over the passage across the sea, either on the island or on the continent, and where it would be best for them to anchor in Libya, and from what point as a base it would be advantageous for them to start in carrying on the war against the Vandals. [4] He instructed him, when he had carried out these orders, to return and meet him at the place called Caucana, about two hundred stades distant from Syracuse, where he and the whole fleet were to anchor. [5] But he made it seem that he was sending him to buy provisions, for the Goths were willing to give them a market as had been decided between the emperor Justinian and Amalasuntha, the mother of Athalaric, who was then a boy being raised by the care of his mother, and held sway over

both the Goths and the Italians [as I will explain in my account of the Goths].[349] [6] For when Theoderic died and the kingdom came to his grandson Athalaric, who had already lost his father, Amalasuntha was fearful both for her child and the kingdom, and cultivated the friendship of Justinian very carefully; she obeyed his commands in all matters and at that time promised to provide a market for his army, and did so.

[7] When Prokopios reached Syracuse, he unexpectedly met a man who had been a fellow citizen and friend from childhood, who had been living in Syracuse for a long time engaged in the shipping business, and he learned from him what he wanted. [8] This man showed him a servant who had three days earlier come from Carthage and said that they need not suspect that there would be any ambush set for the fleet by the Vandals. [9] For they had no idea that an army was coming against them at that time, but all the active men among the Vandals had actually a little before gone on an expedition against Goda. [10] And for this reason Gelimer, with no thought of an enemy in mind, was neglecting Carthage and all the other places by the sea and was staying at Hermione, which is in Byzacium, four days' journey distant from the coast.[350] So it was possible for them to sail without fearing any difficulty and to anchor wherever the wind should send them. [11] When Prokopios heard this, he took the servant by the arm and walked to the harbor of Arethousa where his boat lay at anchor, making many inquiries of the man and investigating every detail. Going on board the ship with him, he gave orders to raise the sails and make all speed for Caucana. [12] The master of the servant stood on the shore wondering that he did not give the man back to him, and Prokopios shouted out, when the ship was already under way, begging him not to be angry with him, [13] for it was necessary that the servant meet the general; after leading the army to Libya, he would return shortly to Syracuse with much money in his pocket.

[14] But coming to Caucana they found everyone in deep grief. For Dorotheos, the general of the Armenian armies, had died there, leaving to the whole army a great sense of loss. [15] But Belisarios, when the servant came before him and related his whole story, was overjoyed and, after heaping many praises upon Prokopios, he issued orders to signal the departure with the trumpets. [16] Setting sail quickly, they touched at the islands of Gozo and Malta, which mark the boundary between the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian Seas. [17] There a strong east wind arose for them and on the next day it carried the ships to the coast of Libya, at the place which the Romans call in their own tongue "Shoal's Head." The place is called Caput Vada, and it is five days' journey from Carthage for an active traveler.

15. When they came near the shore, the general ordered them to furl the sails, drop the anchors from the ships, and make a halt. Calling together all the commanders to his ship, he opened a discussion with regard to the disembarkation. [2] Thereupon many

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349. The bracketed clause is found in the margin of one manuscript and is omitted from another, and so is suspected of being an interpolation.

350. Its location is unknown.

speeches were made inclining to either side, and Archelaos came forward and spoke as follows:

Archelaos to the war council

I admire the virtue of our general, who, while surpassing all in judgment by far, being the most experienced, and at the same time holding the power alone, has proposed an open discussion and invites each one of us to speak, so that we will be able to choose whichever course seems best, although it is possible for him to decide alone on what must be done and to command freely as he wishes. [3] But as for you, my fellow officers—I do not know how to say this easily—one might wonder that each of you did not hasten to be the first to oppose disembarkation. [4] Still, I realize that making a suggestion to those who are entering upon a perilous course brings no personal advantage to him who offers the advice, but usually brings him blame. [5] For when things go well for people they attribute their success to their own judgment or fortune, but when they fail they blame only the one who advised them. [6] Nevertheless I will speak out. For it is not right for those who are deliberating about safety to shrink from blame. [7] You intend to disembark on enemy territory, fellow officers; but in what harbor are you planning to place the ships in safety? Or in what city's wall will you find security for yourselves? [8] Have you not then heard that this promontory—I mean from Carthage to Iunci—extends, they say, for a journey of nine days, altogether without harbors and lying open to the wind from whatever quarter it may blow? [9] Not a single walled town is left in all Libya except Carthage, thanks to the decision of Geiseric.[351] [10] One might add that this place, they say, entirely lacks water. Come now, if you wish, let us suppose that something goes wrong, and let us make the decision with that in mind. [11] For it is not in keeping with human experience nor with the nature of things that those who enter into contests of arms should expect no difficulty. [12] If, then, after we have disembarked upon the mainland, a storm should fall upon us, will it not be necessary that one of two things will happen to the ships, either that they flee away as far as possible, or perish upon this promontory? [13] Then by what means will we be supplied with necessities? Let no one look to me as the prefect charged with maintenance. For every official, when deprived of the means of administering his office, is of necessity reduced to the name and standing of a private person. [14] And where will we deposit our superfluous arms or any other part of our necessities when we are compelled to receive the attack of the barbarians? In that case, it is not well even to say how it will turn out. [15] I think that we ought to make straight for Carthage. For they say that there is a harbor called Stagnum not more than forty stades distant from it,[352] which is entirely unguarded and large enough for the whole fleet. If we make this the base of our operations, we will carry on the war without difficulty. [16] And I, for my part, think it likely that we will win Carthage by a sudden attack, especially as the enemy are far away from it, and

351. Cf. 3.5.8–10.

352. Its location is unknown.

that after we have won it we will have no further trouble. [17] That is how it goes with all human affairs: when the chief point has been captured, they collapse after no long time. We ought, then, to bear in mind all these things and choose the best course.

So spoke Archelaos.

[18] Belisarios, then, spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the war council

Let no one of you, fellow officers, think that my words are those of an arbiter, nor that they are spoken last so that it becomes necessary for all to obey them, whatever they may be. [19] I have heard what seems best to each of you. It is now proper for me also to lay before you what I think so that we can jointly choose the better course. [20] But it is worth reminding you of this fact, that the soldiers said openly a little earlier that they feared the dangers of the sea and would turn to flight if a hostile ship attacked them. We prayed to God to show us the land of Libya and allow us a peaceful disembarkation on it. [21] Things now being what they are, I think it is the mark of foolish men to pray to receive from God the more favorable fortune and then, when this is given to them, to reject it and go in the contrary direction. [22] If we do sail straight for Carthage and a hostile fleet encounters us, the soldiers would be blameless if they were to flee with all their might, for a delinquency announced beforehand carries within it its own defense; but for us, even if we come through safely, there will be no forgiveness. [23] Now, while there are many difficulties if we remain in the ships, it will be sufficient, I think, to mention only one, that by which they especially wish to frighten us when they rattle us with the chance of a storm. [24] For if a storm were to fall upon us, one of two things, they say, must necessarily befall the ships, either that they flee far from Libya or be destroyed upon this headland. [25] What then under the present circumstances will be more to our advantage to choose? To have the ships alone destroyed, or to have lost everything, men and all? Apart from this, at the present time we will fall upon the enemy unprepared, and in all probability will fare as we desire; for military affairs are mastered by the element of surprise.[353] [26] But a little later, when the enemy have already made their preparation, the struggle before us will be one of strength evenly matched. [27] One might add that it would be necessary perhaps to fight even for the disembarkation, and to strive for that which now we have within our grasp but over which we are deliberating as a thing not necessary. [28] And if, when we are engaged in conflict, a storm also comes upon us, as often happens at sea, then while struggling against both the waves and the Vandals, we will regret our prudence. [29] As for me, then, I say that we must disembark upon the land with all possible speed, landing horses and arms and whatever else we consider necessary for our use, and that we must dig a trench quickly and throw a stockade around us that will contribute to our safety no less than any circuit-wall one might mention, and with that as our base must carry on the war if anyone attacks us. [30]

353. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 2.61.3.

> And if we show ourselves brave men, we will lack nothing by way of provisions. For those who prevail over the enemy are lords also of his possessions. Victory invests itself with all the wealth and then sets it down again on the side to which she inclines. Therefore, it is now in your hands to keep us safe and bring to us an abundance of good things.

[31] When Belisarios had said this, the whole assembly agreed and adopted his proposal. Dissolving the meeting, they made the disembarkation as quickly as possible, about three months after their departure from Byzantion. [32] Indicating a certain spot on the shore, the general ordered both soldiers and sailors to dig a trench and place the stockade about it. [33] And they did as directed. As a great throng was working, fear was driving their enthusiasm, and the general was urging them on, not only was the trench dug on the same day but the stockade was also completed and the pointed stakes fixed in place all around. [34] In fact, while they were digging the trench, something altogether amazing happened. A great abundance of water sprang forth from the earth, a thing that had not happened before in Byzacium, besides which the place was utterly waterless. [35] This water sufficed for all the needs of both men and animals. In congratulating the general, Prokopios said that he rejoiced at the abundance of water, not so much because of its usefulness as because it seemed to him the sign of an easy victory, and that God was foretelling a victory to them. And this actually came to pass. [36] That night all the soldiers bivouacked in the camp, setting guards and doing everything else as was customary, except that Belisarios commanded five archers to remain in each ship for the purpose of a guard, and that the dromons should anchor in a circle about them, guarding against anyone who might come to do them harm.

16. But on the following day, when some of the soldiers went out into the fields and laid hands on the fruit, the general inflicted no small corporal punishment on them. He then called all the army together and spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman army

> [2] Using force and eating that which belongs to others seems at other times a wicked thing only on this account, that the injustice is in the act itself; but now such harmful consequences are added to it that—if it is not too harsh to say so—we must consider the question of justice of less account and calculate instead the greatness of the danger that arises from your act. [3] For I have disembarked you upon this land basing my confidence on this alone, that the Libyans, who have always been Romans, are unfaithful and hostile to the Vandals, and for this reason I thought that we would lack no necessities and, besides, that the enemy would not do us any injury by a sudden attack. [4] But now your lack of self-control has turned this entirely around for us. For you have doubtless reconciled the Libyans to the Vandals, bringing their hostility round upon your own selves. [5] Those who are wronged feel enmity by nature toward those who have done them violence, and it has come to this, that you have exchanged your safety and a bountiful supply of goods for a few pieces of silver, when it was possible for you, by purchasing provisions from willing owners, not to appear unjust and to benefit fully from

their friendship. [6] Now, therefore, the war will be between you and both the Vandals and the Libyans, and I, at least, say also that it will be against God himself, whose aid no one who does wrong can invoke. [7] So stop trespassing upon the possessions of others and repudiate any gain that is full of dangers. [8] This is a time in which moderation, more than anything else, can save you but when disorder leads to death. If you heed these words, you will find God propitious, the Libyan people well-disposed, and the race of the Vandals vulnerable to attack.

[9] With these words Belisarios dismissed the assembly. At that time he heard that the city of Syllectum was distant one day's journey from the camp, lying close to the sea on the road leading to Carthage, and that its walls had long been demolished, but the inhabitants of the place, on account of the attacks of the Moors, had made a barrier on all sides with the walls of their houses and guarded a kind of fortified enclosure; so he sent one of his spearmen, Boriades, together with some of the guardsmen, with orders to make an attempt on the city and, if they captured it, to do no harm to it but to promise ten thousand good things and say that they had come for their freedom, so that the army could enter it. [10] They came near the city about dusk and passed the night hidden in a ravine. At dawn, meeting some peasants going into the city with wagons, they entered quietly with them and took possession of the city with no trouble. [11] When day came and no one had begun any disturbance, they called together the priest and all the notables and announced the general's commands; receiving the keys of the entrances from willing hands, they sent them on to the general.

[12] On the same day the overseer of the public post deserted, handing over all the government horses. They captured also one of those who are occasionally sent to convey the royal responses, whom they call *veredarii*, and the general did him no harm but presented him with much gold and, receiving pledges from him, put into his hand a letter that the emperor Justinian had addressed to the Vandals, to give to the Vandal magistrates. [13] The letter said the following:

Justinian to the Vandals

We have not decided to make war against the Vandals, nor are we breaking the treaty with Geiseric, but rather we are trying to dethrone your tyrant, who, disregarding Geiseric's will, has imprisoned your king and is keeping him in custody, and those of his relatives whom he hated vehemently he put to death, and the rest, after robbing them of their sight, he keeps under guard, not allowing them to end their misfortunes by death. [14] Therefore, you should join forces with us and jointly free yourselves[354] from so wicked a tyranny, in order to be able to enjoy both peace and freedom. We give you pledges in the name of God that these things will come to you by our hand.

[15] Such was the message of the emperor's letter. But the man who received it from Belisarios did not dare to reveal it openly; he showed it secretly to his friends but accomplished nothing of consequence.

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354. This verb alludes to the same offer made by the Spartan king Archidamos to the Plataians right before their destruction (Thucydides, *History* 2.72.1).

17. Belisarios, arraying his army as if for battle in the following manner, began the march to Carthage. He chose three hundred of his guardsmen, able warriors, and gave them to Ioannes, who was in charge of his household expenditures; such a person the Romans call an *optio*. [2] He was an Armenian by birth, a man gifted with discretion and courage in the highest degree. This Ioannes, then, he commanded to advance ahead of the army, at a distance of not less than twenty stades, and if he should see anything of the enemy to report it with all speed so that they might not be compelled to enter into battle unprepared. [3] The allied Massagetai he commanded to travel constantly to the left of the army, keeping as many stades away or more. He himself marched in the rear with the best soldiers. [4] For he suspected that it would not be long before Gelimer, following them from Hermione, made an attack on them. On the right side there was no fear, as they were traveling not far from the coast. [5] And he commanded the sailors to follow along with them always and not to separate themselves far from the army, but when the wind was favoring to lower the great sails and follow with the small sails, which they call *dolones*, and when the wind dropped altogether to keep the ships under way as well as they could by rowing.

[6] When Belisarios reached Syllectum he kept the soldiers in line so that they neither began to lay unjust hands on anything nor acted inappropriately; he himself, by displaying great gentleness and kindness, won the Libyans to his side so completely that thereafter he made the journey as if in his own land. The inhabitants of the land neither withdrew nor wished to conceal anything, but they both furnished a market and served the soldiers in whatever else they wanted. [7] Traversing eighty stades each day, we completed the journey to Carthage, passing the night either in a city, should it so chance, or in a camp made as thoroughly secure as circumstances permitted. [8] Thus we passed through the city of Leptis [Minus] and Hadrumetum and reached the place called Grasse, 350 stades distant from Carthage.[355] [9] In that place was a palace of the ruler of the Vandals and a park, the most beautiful of all we know. [10] For it is excellently watered by springs and is very wooded. All the trees are full of fruit so that each soldier pitched his tent among fruit trees and, although all of them ate their fill of the fruit, which was then ripe, there was practically no diminution to be seen in the fruit.

[11] But Gelimer, as soon as he heard in Hermione that the enemy were at hand, wrote to his brother Ammata in Carthage to kill Hilderic and all the others whom he was keeping under guard, whether they were related to him or not, and commanded him to make ready the Vandals and all the others in the city who were fit for war; in this way, when the enemy was inside the narrow passage at the suburb of the city which they call Decimum,[356] they might join together from both sides, surround them, and, catching them as if in a net, destroy them. [12] Ammata carried this out and killed
early Sept. 533 Hilderic, who was a relative of his, and Euagees, and all the Libyans who were close

355. Perhaps near Hammamet.

356. I.e., at the tenth milestone from Carthage, but its exact location is uncertain today.

to with them. [13] For Hoamer had already departed from the world. Arming the Vandals, he prepared them to make his attack at the opportune moment. [14] But Gelimer was following behind without letting it be known to us, except that on the night when we bivouacked in Grasse, scouts coming from both armies met each other and, after an exchange of blows, they each withdrew to their own camp; in this way it became evident to us that the enemy were not far. [15] As we proceeded from there it was impossible to discern the ships. For high rocks extending well into the sea cause ships to make a great circuit, and there is a projecting headland,[357] inside which lies the town of Hermes. [16] Belisarios therefore commanded the prefect Archelaos and the admiral Kalonymos not to put in at Carthage, but to remain about two hundred stades away until he himself summoned them. [17] Departing from Grasse, we came on the fourth day to Decimum, seventy stades distant from Carthage.

18. On that day Gelimer commanded his nephew Gibamund to go ahead of the rest *13 Sept.*
of the army on the left side with two thousand Vandals so that Ammata coming from *533*
Carthage, Gelimer himself coming from the rear, and Gibamund from the country to the left, might unite and accomplish the task of encircling the enemy with less difficulty and exertion. [2] As for me, during this struggle I was moved to wonder at the ways of heaven and of men, and how God, who sees from afar what the future holds, traces out the manner in which it seems best to him that things should come to pass, while men, whether they get it wrong or plan correctly, do not know that they have made a mistake, if that should chance to be the case, or have acted correctly, so that in all of this a path is laid down for Chance, who implements all that has been ordained beforehand. [3] If Belisarios had not thus arranged his forces, commanding the men under Ioannes to take the lead and the Massagetai to march on the left of the army, we would never have been able to escape the Vandals. [4] And even with this planned so by Belisarios, if Ammata had observed the opportune time and had not anticipated this by about the fourth part of a day, the cause of the Vandals would never have fallen as it did. [5] As it was, Ammata came early to Decimum about midday, while both we and the Vandal army were far away, and he went wrong in that he did not arrive at the right time and also in leaving at Carthage the army of the Vandals, commanding them to come to Decimum as quickly as possible while he with a few men (and not even the pick of the army at that) joined battle with Ioannes' men. [6] He killed twelve of the best men who were fighting in the front rank, but he himself fell, having shown himself a brave man in this engagement. [7] After Ammata's fall the rout became complete, and the Vandals, fleeing at top speed, swept back all those who were coming from Carthage to Decimum. [8] For they were not advancing in order and drawn up as for battle, but in companies, and small ones at that; for they were coming in bands of twenty or thirty. [9] Seeing the Vandals under Ammata fleeing and thinking that their pursuers were a great multitude, they turned and joined in the flight. [10] Ioannes and his men, killing all whom they

357. I.e., Cape Bon.

met, advanced as far as the gates of Carthage. [11] And there was so great a slaughter of the Vandals in those seventy stades that those who beheld it would have supposed that it was the work of an enemy twenty thousand strong.

[12] At the same time Gibamund and his two thousand came to the Field of Salt, which is forty stades distant from Decimum on the left as one goes to Carthage, and is destitute of human habitation or trees or anything else, as the salt in the water permits nothing except salt to be produced there; in that place they encountered the Huns and were all destroyed. [13] Now there was a man among the Massagetai, well gifted with courage and strength, the leader of a few men. This man had the privilege handed down from his fathers and ancestors to be the first in all the Hunnic armies to attack the enemy. [14] It was not lawful for a man of the Massagetai to strike first in battle and capture any of the enemy until someone from this house began the struggle with the enemy. [15] So when the two armies had come not far from each other, this man rode out and stopped alone close to the Vandal army. [16] The Vandals, either because they were dumbfounded at the spirit of the man or perhaps because they suspected that the enemy were trying to trick them, decided neither to move nor to shoot at the man. [17] I think that, as they had no experience of battle with the Massagetai but had heard that the nation was very warlike, they were terrified at the danger. [18] The man returned to his compatriots and said that God had sent them these strangers as a ready feast. [19] Then at length they charged and the Vandals did not withstand them: breaking their ranks and never thinking of resistance, they were all disgracefully destroyed.

19. We had learned nothing of what had happened and were going on to Decimum. Belisarios, seeing a place suitable for a camp thirty-five stades distant from Decimum, surrounded it with a palisade that was very well made and, placing all the infantry there, called together the whole army and spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman army

[2] Fellow soldiers, the decisive moment of the struggle is already at hand. I see that the enemy are advancing upon us. The ships have been taken far from us by the nature of the place. It has come to this: our hope of safety lies in our hands. [3] For there is not a friendly city, no, nor any other stronghold in which we may put our trust and have confidence for ourselves. [4] If we show ourselves brave men, it is likely that we will overcome the enemy in the war, but if we are at all soft, all that remains is for us to fall to the Vandals and be destroyed disgracefully. [5] Yet there are many advantages on our side to help us toward victory. There is justice, with which we have come against our enemy (for we are here to recover what is our own), and the hatred of the Vandals toward their own tyrant. [6] For the alliance of God goes naturally to those who put forth just claims, and a soldier who is ill-disposed toward his ruler cannot be a brave man. [7] Apart from this, we have all the while been engaged with Persians and Skythians, but the Vandals, ever since they conquered Libya, have seen not a single enemy except naked Moors. [8] Who does not know that in every work practice leads to skill while idleness leads to ignorance? Now the stockade, from which we will have to carry on the war, has been made by us in the best possible way. [9] We are able to

> deposit here our weapons and everything else that we are unable to carry when we go forth, and when we return here again we will lack no provisions. [10] I pray that each one of you, calling to mind his own valor and those you left at home, marches with contempt against the enemy.

[11] After speaking these words and adding a prayer, Belisarios left his wife and the palisade to the infantry, and himself set forth with all the horsemen. [12] For it did not seem to him advantageous at present to risk an engagement with the whole army, but to skirmish first with the cavalry, make trial of the enemy's strength, and finally fight a decisive battle with the whole army. [13] Sending forward, therefore, the commanders of the *foederati*, he himself followed with the rest of the army and his own spearmen and guards. [14] When the *foederati* and their leaders reached Decimum, they saw the corpses of the fallen—twelve comrades from the forces of Ioannes and near them Ammata and some Vandals. [15] Hearing the whole story from the inhabitants of the place, they were upset and did not know where they ought to go. But while they were still at a loss and were looking over the whole country there from the hills, a dust cloud appeared in the south and then a little later a large force of Vandal horsemen. [16] They sent to Belisarios urging him to come as quickly as possible, as the enemy were upon them. The opinions of the commanders were divided. [17] Some thought that they ought to close with their assailants, but others said that their force was insufficient for this. [18] While they were debating thus among themselves, the barbarians drew near under the leadership of Gelimer, following a road between the one that Belisarios was on and the one by which the Massagetai who had encountered Gibamund had come. [19] As the land was hilly on both sides, it did not allow him to see either the disaster of Gibamund or Belisarios' stockade, nor even the road along which Belisarios' men were advancing. [20] But when they came near each other, a contest arose between the two armies as to which would capture the highest of the hills there. [21] For it seemed a suitable one to encamp upon, and both sides preferred to engage with the enemy from there. [22] The Vandals got there first and took possession of the hill by crowding off their assailants and routing them, having already become an object of terror to them. [23] The Romans in flight came to a place seven stades distant from Decimum; as it chanced, Viliarit was there, the spearman of Belisarios, with eight hundred guardsmen. [24] All supposed that Viliarit's men would receive them, hold their position, and would go against the Vandals together with them. But when they came together, those soldiers all unexpectedly fled at top speed and went on the run to Belisarios.

[25] From that point on I am unable to say what came over to Gelimer that, with victory in his hands, he willingly gave it up to the enemy, unless one ought to refer foolish actions also to God, who, whenever he decides that some adversity will happen to a man, touches first his reason and does not allow him to deliberate on what might bring him advantage. [26] For if he had made the pursuit immediately, I do not think that even Belisarios would have withstood him, and our cause would have been utterly and completely lost, [27] so numerous appeared the force of the Vandals and so great the fear they inspired in the Romans; or if he had ridden straight for Carthage, he would easily have

killed all of Ioannes' men, who, heedless of any precaution, were wandering about the plain by ones and twos stripping the dead. [28] He would have preserved the city with its money, captured our ships, which had come rather near, and taken from us all hope both of sailing away and of victory. But he did none of these things. [29] Instead, he came down from the hill at a walk and, when he reached level ground and saw the corpse of his brother, he turned to lamentations and, in caring for his burial, he blunted the edge of his opportunity, which once lost does not come back. [30] Meanwhile, Belisarios met the fugitives and ordered them to stand at attention; he arrayed them all in order and rebuked them at length. Then, after hearing of the death of Ammata and the pursuit of Ioannes, and learning what he wished concerning the place and the enemy, he proceeded at full speed against Gelimer and the Vandals. [31] But the barbarians, having already fallen into disorder and being now unprepared, did not withstand their onset but fled with all their might, losing many there, and the battle ended at night. [32] Now the Vandals were in flight, not to Carthage nor to Byzacium, whence they had come, but to the plain of Bulla and the road leading to Numidia. [33] The men with Ioannes and the Massagetai returned to us about dusk and, after learning all that had happened and reporting what they had done, they passed the night with us at Decimum.

14 Sept. 533 **20.** On the following day the infantry with the wife of Belisarios came up and we all proceeded together on the road toward Carthage, which we reached in the late evening. We made camp, although no one hindered us from marching into the city at once. For the Carthaginians opened the gates and burned lights everywhere and the city was brilliant with the flames that whole night, and those of the Vandals who had been left behind were sitting as suppliants in the sanctuaries. [2] But Belisarios prevented the entrance in order to guard against ambushes being set for them by the enemy, and also to prevent his soldiers from having the freedom to turn to plundering under cover of night. [3] On that day, as an east wind arose for them, the ships reached the headland and the Carthaginians, who had already sighted them, removed the iron chains of the harbor which they call Mandracium, making it possible for the fleet to enter. [4] Now there is in the king's palace a room filled with darkness, which the Carthaginians call "the Bend," where all were cast with whom the tyrant was angry. [5] In that place, as it happened, many of the eastern merchants had been confined up to that time. [6] Gelimer was angry with them, charging them with having incited the emperor to the war, and they were all about to be destroyed, this having been decided upon by Gelimer on that day that Ammata was killed at Decimum; to such a degree of danger did they come. [7] The guard of this prison, upon hearing what had happened at Decimum and seeing the fleet inside the cape, entered the room and asked them, who had not yet learned the good news but were sitting in the darkness expecting death, which of their possessions they would give up to be saved. [8] When they said they would give up everything he might wish, he demanded nothing of all their treasures but required them all to swear that, if they escaped, they would assist him also with all their power when he came into danger. And they did this. [9] Then he told them the whole story and, tearing off a plank from the side toward the sea, he pointed out the fleet approaching and released them all from the prison, going out with them.

[10] But the men on the ships, who had not yet heard what the army had done on the land, were at a loss and, slackening their sails, they sent to Mercurium and learned what had taken place at Decimum; becoming overjoyed, they sailed on. [11] When, with a favoring wind blowing, they came to within 150 stades of Carthage, Archelaos and the soldiers ordered them to anchor there, fearing the general's warning, but the sailors would not obey. [12] They said that the promontory at that point lacked a harbor and also that the signs were that a well-known storm, which the natives call the Cypriana, would arise immediately. [13] They predicted that, if it came upon them in that place, they would not be able to save even one of the ships. And it was as they said. [14] So they slackened their sails for a short time and deliberated. They did not think they ought to try for Mandracium, [15] for they respected the commands of Belisarios and at the same time suspected that the entrance to Mandracium was closed by chains, and besides they feared that this harbor was insufficient for the whole fleet. Stagnum, on the other hand, seemed to them well situated (for it is forty stades distant from Carthage) and there was nothing in it to hinder them, and also it was large enough for the whole fleet. [16] They arrived there about dusk and all of them anchored, except Kalonymos with some of the sailors who disregarded the general and all the others and went off secretly to Mandracium, with no one daring to hinder him. There he plundered the property of the merchants dwelling by the sea, both foreigners and Carthaginians.

[17] On the following day Belisarios ordered those on the ships to disembark *15 Sept. 533* and, after marshalling the whole army and drawing it up as for battle, he marched into Carthage, for he feared encountering an ambush set by the enemy. [18] There he reminded the soldiers at length how much good fortune had come to them because they had displayed moderation toward the Libyans, and he exhorted them earnestly to preserve their good order diligently in Carthage. [19] For all the Libyans had been Romans in earlier times and had come under the Vandals by no will of their own and had suffered many outrages at the hands of these barbarians. [20] Hence the emperor had entered into war with the Vandals and it was not holy for any harm to come from them to the people who had gone to war against the Vandals precisely to restore their freedom. [21] After this exhortation he entered Carthage and, as no enemy was seen by them, he went up to the palace and seated himself on Gelimer's throne. [22] A crowd of merchants and other Carthaginians came before Belisarios there with much shouting, persons whose homes were by the sea, and they made the charge that there had been a robbery of their property on the preceding night by the sailors. [23] He then bound Kalonymos by oaths to bring all the stolen goods to light. [24] Kalonymos took the oath but disregarded what he had sworn, temporarily keeping the money as his plunder, but not long afterward he paid his just penalty in Byzantion. [25] For being taken with the disease called apoplexy, he became insane, bit off his own tongue, and then died. But this happened at a later time.

21. When the time came, Belisarios commanded that lunch be prepared for them in the place where Gelimer was accustomed to entertain the leaders of the Vandals. [2] This place the Romans call "Delphix," not in their own tongue but using the Greek word

according to ancient custom. For in the palace at Rome, where the dining couches of the emperor were placed, a tripod had stood since ancient times, on which the emperor's wine-pourers used to place the cups. [3] The Romans call a tripod Delphix as they were first made at Delphi, and from this both in Byzantion and wherever there is an imperial dining couch they call the room Delphix, for the Romans use the Greek also in calling an imperial residence a "palace." [4] For a Greek named Pallas lived in this place before the capture of Troy and built an impressive house there, which they called *Palation*. When Augustus received the imperial power, he decided to take up his first residence in that house, and from this they call the place wherever the emperor resides a palace.[358] [5] So Belisarios dined in the Delphix and with him all the notables of the army. [6] And it happened that the lunch made for Gelimer on the preceding day was in readiness. We feasted on that very food that the servants of Gelimer served, and they poured the wine and waited upon us in every way. [7] And it was possible to see Chance in all her glory making a display of the fact that all things are hers and that nothing is truly owned by any man. [8] It fell to the lot of Belisarios on that day to win such fame as no one of his contemporaries ever won nor indeed any men of ancient times. [9] For though Roman soldiers were not accustomed to enter a subject city without confusion, even if they numbered only five hundred, and especially if they made the entry unexpectedly, this general kept all the soldiers under his command in line so that there was not a single act of insolence nor threat, [10] indeed nothing happened to hinder the business of the city. In a captured city, then, that had changed its regime and joined a different kingdom, it came about that no man's household was excluded from the marketplace. The clerks drew up their lists of the soldiers and conducted them to their lodgings, just as usual, and they obtained their lunch by purchase from the market, as each one wanted, and they were quiet.

[11] Afterward Belisarios gave pledges to those Vandals who had fled to the sanctuaries, and took thought for the fortifications. For the circuit-wall of Carthage had been so neglected that in many places it had become accessible to anyone who wished and easy to attack. [12] No small part of it had collapsed and it was for this reason, the Carthaginians said, that Gelimer had not made his stand in the city. [13] For he thought that it would be impossible in a short time to restore such a circuit-wall to a secure condition. [14] They also said that an old oracle had been uttered by the children in earlier times in Carthage, to the effect that "gamma will pursue beta, and again beta

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358. The word is actually of Latin origin (*palatium*, the Palatine Hill), is *palation* in Greek (the word used throughout this passage by Prokopios), and is the origin of "palace." But Greek theorists had given it a Greek origin. Dionysios of Halikarnassos, *Roman Antiquities* 1.31–32, says that colonists under Evander who settled there sixty years before the Trojan War came from Pallantion in Arcadia, and named the place after their home, which the Romans later mispronounced. He rejects the theory that it was named after Pallas, one of Evander's descendants who died young. Prokopios, like Malalas, *Chronicle* 6.24, 7.1, gives the second version. Ioannes Lydos, *On the Magistracies* 1.5, refers to Evander's migration (but not to Pallas). *Delphix* does mean "tripod" in Greek.

itself will pursue gamma." [15] At that time it had been spoken by the children in play and had been left as an unexplained riddle, but now it was perfectly clear to all. [16] For formerly Geiseric had driven out Bonifatius and now Belisarios was doing the same to Gelimer. This, then, whether it was a rumor or an oracle, came out as I have stated.

[17] At that time a dream also came to light, which had been seen often before this by many persons, but without being clear as to how it would turn out. The dream was as follows. Cyprian, a holy man, is revered above all others by the Carthaginians.[359] [18] They have founded a noteworthy temple in his honor before the city on the seashore, in which they conduct all other customary services and also celebrate a festival that they call the Cypriana. Sailors are accustomed to name the storm, which I recently mentioned,[360] after it, giving it the same name as the festival, as it tends to come on at the time when the Libyans have always celebrated the festival. [19] This temple the Vandals took from the Christians by force during the reign of Huneric. [20] They immediately drove out their priests from there in great dishonor and they themselves thereafter attended to the festival which, they said, now belonged to the Arians. [21] The Libyans were angry on this account and altogether at a loss, but Cyprian, they say, often sent them a dream saying that there was no need for the Christians to be concerned about him; for as time went on he himself would be his own avenger. [22] When the report of this was passed around and came to all the Libyans, they were expecting that some vengeance would come upon the Vandals at some time because of this sacred festival, but were unable to conjecture how in the world the vision would be realized for them. [23] Now, therefore, when the emperor's fleet had come to Libya, as the time had already come round and the celebration of the festival would be on the succeeding day, the priests of the Arians, in spite of the fact that Ammata had led the Vandals to Decimum, cleansed the whole sanctuary and were engaged in hanging up the most beautiful of the votive offerings there, preparing the lamps, bringing out the sacred vessels from the storehouses, and preparing all things with exactness, arranging everything according to its appropriate use. [24] But the events at Decimum turned out in the manner described. [25] So the priests of the Arians were off in flight, while the Christians who practice to the right faith came to the temple of Cyprian, lit all the lamps, and attended to the sacred festival just as is customary for them to perform this service. Thus it was known to all what the vision of the dream was foretelling. This, then, came about in this way.

22. The Vandals, recalling an old saying, marveled and understood clearly thereafter that for a man, at least, no hope could be impossible nor any possession secure. [2] I will explain what this saying was and how it was spoken. [3] When the Vandals originally were hard-pressed by hunger and about to abandon their ancestral abodes, a part of them was left behind who were reluctant to go and not happy to follow Godigisclus. [4] As time passed it seemed to those who remained behind that they had an abundance

359. St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage and martyr (d. 257).

360. 3.20.12–13.

of good things, and Geiseric with his followers gained possession of Libya. [5] When this was heard by those who had not followed Godigisclus, they rejoiced, as henceforth the country was altogether sufficient for them to live upon. [6] But fearing that at some much later time those who had conquered Libya or their descendants would in some way be driven out of Libya and return to their ancestral homes (for they never thought that the Romans would let Libya be held forever), they sent ambassadors to them. [7] These men, coming before Geiseric, said that they rejoiced with their compatriots who had met with such success, but that they were no longer able to guard the land which he and his men had thought so little of that they had settled in Libya. [8] They asked therefore that, if they laid no claim to their fatherland, they would bestow it as an unprofitable possession upon themselves, so that their title to the land might be as secure as possible and, if anyone should come to do them harm, they might not disdain to die on its behalf. [9] Geiseric, accordingly, and all the other Vandals thought that they spoke fairly and justly, and were in the act of granting everything the envoys desired of them. [10] But an old man who was esteemed among them and had a great reputation for wisdom said that he would by no means permit such a thing. "For in human affairs," he said, "nothing stays secure. Not one thing that now exists is stable for all time for them, while as for that which does not yet exist, anything may happen." [11] When Geiseric heard this, he expressed approval and decided to send the envoys away empty-handed. At that time both he himself and the man who had given the advice were judged worthy of ridicule by all the Vandals, as foreseeing the impossible. [12] But when these things which have been told took place, the Vandals changed their view of the nature of human affairs and realized that the saying was that of a wise man.

[13] As for those Vandals who stayed in their native land, neither memory nor any name has been preserved to my time. For as, I suppose, they were a small number, they were either overpowered by neighboring barbarians or mingled with them not at all unwillingly and their name gave way to that of the others. [14] When the Vandals were conquered at that time by Belisarios, no thought occurred to them to go from there to their ancestral homes. [15] For they were not able to convey themselves from Libya to Europe on short notice, especially as they had no ships at hand; instead; they paid the penalty there for all the wrongs they had done to the Romans and, not least of all, to the Zakynthians. [16] For Geiseric once fell suddenly upon the towns in the Peloponnese and attempted to assault Tainaron. Being repulsed from there and losing many of his followers, he withdrew in complete disorder. [17] While he was still filled with anger on account of this, he landed on Zakynthos and, killing many whom he met and enslaving five hundred notables, he sailed away soon after. [18] When he reached the middle of the Adriatic Sea, he cut into pieces the bodies of the five hundred and threw them all about the sea without the least concern. But this happened in earlier times.

23. At that time Gelimer, by distributing much money to the farmers among the Libyans and showing friendliness toward them, managed to win many to his side. [2] These he commanded to kill the Romans who went out into the country, proclaiming a fixed sum of gold for each man killed, to be paid to him who did the deed. [3] So they

killed many from the Roman army, not soldiers, however, but slaves and servants, who because of a desire for money went up into the villages stealthily and were caught. [4] The farmers brought their heads before Gelimer and departed with their pay, while he supposed that they had slain enemy soldiers.

[5] It was at that time that Diogenes, a spearman of Belisarios, made a display of valorous deeds. For he was sent, together with twenty-two of the guardsmen, to spy upon their opponents and came to a place two days' journey distant from Carthage. [6] The farmers of the place, being unable to kill these men, reported to Gelimer that they were there. [7] He chose and sent against them three hundred horsemen of the Vandals, enjoining upon them to bring them all alive before him. [8] For it seemed to him a most remarkable achievement to capture a personal retainer of Belisarios with twenty-two guardsmen. [9] Now Diogenes and his party had entered a certain house and were sleeping on the upper floor, having no thought of war as they learned that the enemy were far away. [10] But the Vandals, coming there at early dawn, thought that it would not be to their advantage to destroy the doors of the house or to enter in the dark, for if they were involved in a night encounter they might kill each another instead and, if that happened, they might provide a way of escape for a large number of the enemy in the dark. [11] But in reality they did this because cowardice had paralyzed their minds, although it would have been possible for them with no trouble, by carrying torches or even without these, to catch their enemies in their beds not only without weapons, but absolutely naked. [12] As it was, they made a phalanx in a circle about the whole house and especially at the doors, and all took their stand there. [13] But in the meantime it happened that one of the Roman soldiers was roused from sleep and, noticing the noise made by the Vandals as they talked stealthily among themselves and moved with their weapons, realized what was happening. Rousing each of his comrades silently, he told them what was going on. [14] Following the opinion of Diogenes, they all put on their clothes quietly and taking up their weapons went below. [15] There they put the bridles on their horses and mounted them unseen by anyone. After standing for a time by the courtyard entrance, they suddenly opened the door and immediately poured out. [16] The Vandals then closed with them, but they accomplished nothing. For the Romans rode hard, protecting themselves with their shields and warding off their assailants with spears. [17] Thus Diogenes escaped the enemy, losing two of his followers, but saving the rest. [18] He himself, however, received three blows in this encounter on the neck and the face, from which he came close to dying, and one blow also on the left hand, as a result of which he was thereafter unable to move his little finger. This, then, took place in that way.

[19] Belisarios offered great sums of money to the artisans engaged in the building trade and to the general throng of workmen, and so he dug a trench deserving of great admiration around the circuit-wall; then, setting stakes close together along it, he entrenched his position. [20] Not only this, he built up in a short time the parts of the wall that had suffered damage, a thing that seemed worthy of wonder not only to the Carthaginians but also to Gelimer himself at a later time. [21] For when he came as a captive to Carthage, he marveled to see the wall and said that his own negligence had

proved the cause of all his present troubles. This, then, was accomplished by Belisarios while in Carthage.

24. But Tzazo, the brother of Gelimer, reached Sardinia with the expedition that was mentioned above,[361] and disembarked at the harbor of Cagliari. At the first onset he captured the city and killed the tyrant Goda and all the fighting men with him. [2] When he heard that the emperor's expedition was in Libya, having as yet learned nothing of what had happened there, he wrote to Gelimer as follows:

Tzazo to Gelimer

> [3] Know, O king of the Vandals and Alans, that the tyrant Goda has perished, having fallen into our hands, and the island is again under your kingdom, so celebrate the festival of the triumph. [4] As for the enemy who have dared to march against our land, expect that their attempt will meet the same fortune as that experienced by those who in former times marched against our ancestors.

[5] The men who took this letter sailed into the harbor of Carthage having no thought that there was a war. [6] They were brought by the guards before the general, put the letter into his hands, and gave him information on the matters about which he asked, being thunderstruck at what they saw and awed at the suddenness of the change. But they suffered nothing harmful at the hands of Belisarios.

[7] At this same time another event also occurred as follows. A short time before the emperor's fleet reached Libya, Gelimer had sent envoys to Spain, among whom were Gotheus and Fuscia, to persuade Theudis, the ruler of the Visigoths, to make an alliance with the Vandals.[362] [8] Upon disembarking on the mainland after crossing the straits at Cadiz, these envoys found Theudis at a place far from the sea. [9] When they had gone up to him, Theudis received them with friendliness and gladly entertained them, and during the feast he pretended to inquire how matters stood with Gelimer and the Vandals. [10] As these envoys had traveled to him rather slowly, it happened that he had heard from others everything that had happened to the Vandals. [11] For a ship sailing for trade had put out from Carthage on the same day as the army marched into the city and, finding a favoring wind, had come to Spain. [12] From it Theudis learned all that had happened in Libya, but he forbade the merchants to reveal it to anyone, in case it became widely known. [13] When Gotheus and his followers replied that everything was as well as possible for them, he asked them for what purpose, then, they had come. [14] When they proposed the alliance, Theudis instructed them go to the coast. "For from there," he said, "you will learn of the affairs at home with certainty." [15] The envoys, supposing that the man was in his cups and his words were not sane, remained silent. [16] But when on the following day they met him and raised the matter of the alliance, and Theudis used the same words a second time, they understood that some change of fortune had befallen them in Libya, but having no concern for Carthage they sailed for that city. [17] When they sailed near it and happened upon some Roman

361. 3.11.23.

362. For Theudis in Spain, see 5.12.50–54.

soldiers, they put themselves in their hands to do with them as they wished. [18] From there they were led away to the general and, reporting the whole story, they suffered no harm at his hands. These things, then, happened thus. [19] As for Kyrillos, coming near to Sardinia and learning what happened to Goda, he sailed to Carthage, where, finding the Roman army and Belisarios victorious, he remained at rest. Solomon was sent to the emperor in order to announce what had been accomplished.

25. Gelimer, upon reaching the plain of Bulla, which is distant from Carthage a journey of four days for an active traveler, not far from the boundaries of Numidia, began to gather there all the Vandals and any Moors who happened to be friendly to him. [2] Few Moors, however, joined his alliance, and these were altogether insubordinate. [3] For all those who ruled over the Moors in Mauretania, Numidia, and Byzacium sent envoys to Belisarios saying that they were slaves of the emperor and promised to fight with him. [4] There were some also who even surrendered their children as hostages and requested that the insignia of office be sent to them from him according to the ancient custom. [5] For it was a law among the Moors that no one should be a ruler over them, even if he was hostile to the Romans, before the emperor of the Romans gave him the tokens of the office. [6] They had already received them from the Vandals, but did not deem the office to be secure. [7] These symbols are a staff of silver covered with gold and a silver cap that does not cover the whole head but like a crown held in place on all sides by bands of silver; also a kind of white cloak fastened by a golden brooch on the right shoulder in the form of a Thessalian cape, and a white tunic with embroidery, and a gilded boot. [8] Belisarios sent these things to them and presented each one of them with much money. [9] However, they did not come to fight along with him nor, on the other hand, did they dare give support to the Vandals but, standing to the side of both contestants, they waited to see what the fortune of war would bring. Thus, then, matters stood with the Romans.

[10] Gelimer sent one of the Vandals to Sardinia with a letter to his brother Tzazo. He went quickly to the beach and, finding by chance a merchant ship putting out to sea, sailed into the harbor of Cagliari and put the letter into the hands of Tzazo. The message of the letter was as follows:

Gelimer to Tzazo

> [11] It was not, I think, Goda who caused the island to revolt from us, but some bane from Heaven that fell upon the Vandals. [12] For by depriving us of you and the best Vandals, it has stripped all good things from the house of Geiseric at a stroke. [13] It was not to recover the island for us that you sailed from here, but so that Justinian might be master of Libya. What Chance had decided upon previously it is now possible to know from the outcome. [14] When Belisarios came against us with a small army, valor immediately departed from the Vandals, taking good fortune with it. [15] Ammata and Gibamund have fallen, because the Vandals became soft, and the horses, shipyards, all of Libya, and, not least of all, Carthage itself are held already by the enemy. [16] The Vandals are sitting here, having paid with their children and wives and all their possessions

> for their failure to fight bravely in battle. We hold only the plain of Bulla, where our hope in you has set us down and still keeps us. [17] You now, have done with such matters as rebel tyrants and Sardinia and the cares over these things, and come to us with your whole fleet as quickly as possible. For when the most urgent matters are at stake, it is not advisable to fuss over other things. [18] By struggling hereafter in common against the enemy, we will either recover our previous fortune or gain the advantage of not bearing apart from each other the hard fate sent by the Evil Power.

[19] When this letter was brought to Tzazo and he disclosed its contents to the Vandals, they turned to wailing and lamentation, not openly, however, but concealing their feelings as much as possible and avoiding the notice of the islanders, silently among themselves they bewailed their present state. [20] Arranging the matters in hand at random, they manned the ships. [21] Sailing from there with the whole fleet, on the third day they came to land at the point of Libya that marks the boundary between the Numidians and Mauretanians. [22] They reached the plain of Bulla traveling on foot, where they joined the rest of the army. And in that place there were many most pitiable scenes among the Vandals, which I, at least, could never relate as they deserve. [23] For I think that even if one of the enemy themselves had happened to be a spectator at that time, he would probably have felt pity for the Vandals and human fortune generally. [24] For Gelimer and Tzazo threw their arms about each other's necks and could not let go, but they spoke not a word to each other, but kept grasping their hands and weeping, and each of the Vandals with Gelimer embraced one of those who had come from Sardinia in the same way. [25] And they stood for a long time as if grown together and found such comfort as they could in this, and neither did the men of Gelimer ask about Goda (for their present fortune had so stunned them that they were inclined to disregard matters that had previously seemed to them most important), nor could those who came from Sardinia bring themselves to ask about what had happened in Libya. For the place was sufficient for them to infer what had come to pass. [26] Indeed, they made no mention even of their own wives and children, knowing well that whoever was not there with them had either died or fallen into the hands of the enemy. Thus, then, did these things happen.

Book Four

1. Gelimer, seeing all the Vandals assembled together in one place, led his army against Carthage. [2] When they came close to it, they tore down the aqueduct, a structure worth seeing that conducted water into the city. After encamping for a time they withdrew, as no one of the enemy came out against them. [3] Going about the country there they kept the roads under guard and thought that in this way they were besieging Carthage; however, they did not gather any booty, nor plunder the land, but held it as their own. [4] At the same time they kept hoping that there would be some treason on the part of the Carthaginians themselves and those of the Roman soldiers who followed the doctrine of Arius. [5] They also sent to the leaders of the Huns and, promising that they would have many good things from the Vandals, entreated them to become their friends and allies. [6] Now the Huns even before had not been well-disposed toward the cause of the Romans, as they had not come to them willingly as allies (for they asserted that the Roman general Petros had given an oath and then, disregarding what had been sworn, had brought them to Byzantion).[363] Accordingly, they were receptive to the words of the Vandals and promised that when it came to real fighting they would turn with them against the Roman army. [7] But Belisarios had a suspicion of all this (for he had heard it from the deserters), and the circuit-wall had not yet been completed entirely, for which reasons he did not think it possible for his men to go out against the enemy at present, so he was making his preparations within as well as possible. [8] One of the Carthaginians, Laurus by name, having been convicted on a charge of treason and proved guilty by his own secretary, was impaled by Belisarios on a hill before the city, and as a result of this the others came to feel an irresistible fear and refrained from attempts at treason. [9] He courted the Massagetai with gifts, banquets, and every other type of flattering attention every day, and thus persuaded them to disclose to him what Gelimer had promised them on condition that they turn traitors in the battle. [10] These barbarians said that they had no enthusiasm for fighting, for they feared that, if the Vandals were vanquished, the Romans would not send them back to their native land, but they would be compelled to grow old and die there in Libya; besides, they were also concerned, they said, about the booty, in case they were robbed of it. [11] Belisarios gave them pledges that, if the Vandals were conquered decisively, they would be sent to their homes without the least delay and with all their booty, and thus bound them by oaths to assist the Romans with all enthusiasm in carrying out the war.

[12] When all things were prepared by him in the best way possible and the circuit-wall was completed, he called together the whole army and spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman army

> [13] Fellow Romans, I do not think that it is necessary to make an exhortation to you, who have recently conquered the enemy so completely that

363. This is presumably the general Petros whose background is given at 2.15.7–8.

Carthage here and the whole of Libya is a possession of your virtue. For this reason you will have no need of words that incite you to daring, and the spirits of those who have prevailed are unlikely to be overcome. [14] But I think it timely to remind you of one thing, that, if you prove equal to your own selves in valor on the present occasion, all hope will immediately flee from the Vandals and, along with it, any need for you to fight. [15] Thus it is reasonable to enter into this engagement with the greatest eagerness. For toil that is coming to an end and reaching its conclusion is ever sweet to men. As for the Vandal army, heed it not. [16] For war is decided not by numbers of men nor their bodily size, but by the valor that is in the soul. Let the strongest motive that men have, then, enter your minds, namely pride in past achievement. [17] It is a shame, for those at least who can think, to fall short of their potential and be found inferior to their own standard of virtue. For I know well that terror and the memory of failure have taken hold of the enemy and compel them to become less brave: the former terrifies because of what has already happened, the latter brushes aside their hope of success.[364] [18] For once Fortune is seen to be bad, it immediately enslaves the spirit of those who have fallen in her way.[365] I will explain how the struggle involves for you a greater stake now than formerly. [19] In the former battle the danger was that we would not take the land of others if things did not go well for us, but now, if we do not win the struggle, we will lose land that is ours. [20] In proportion, then, as it is easier to have nothing than to lose what one has, just so now our fear touches our most vital concerns more than before. [21] At that time we chanced to win the victory with the infantry absent, but now, entering battle with God propitious and with our whole army, I have hopes of capturing the enemy camp, men and all. [22] Thus, having the end of the war at hand, do not put it off to another time because of negligence, in which case you will have to look for the opportune moment after it has run past us. [23] The fortune of war does not proceed in the same manner as before, especially if the war is prolonged by the will of those who are carrying it out. [24] For that Power of Good or Ill is accustomed to bring retribution always upon those who abandon the good fortune that is present. If anyone considers that the enemy, seeing their children and wives and most precious possessions in our hands, will be daring beyond reason and will incur risks beyond the strength they have, he does not think rightly. [25] For an overpowering passion springing up in the heart on behalf of what is most precious tends to diminish men's actual strength and does not allow them to use present opportunities. Considering, then, all these things, you should go against the enemy with great contempt.

Dec. 533 **2.** After these words of exhortation, Belisarios sent out all the cavalry on the same day, except five hundred, and also the guardsmen and the standard, which the Romans call *bandum*, entrusting them to Ioannes the Armenian and directing him to skirmish

364. Cf. Phormion in Thucydides, *History* 2.89.2 and 11, and see Tzazon below in 4.2.29.

365. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 2.61.3.

only if the opportunity arose. [2] He himself on the next day followed with the infantry forces and the five hundred horsemen. [3] The Massagetai, deliberating among themselves, decided, in order to seem friendly to both Gelimer and Belisarios, neither to begin fighting for the Romans nor to go over to the Vandals before the encounter, but whenever one side seemed to be having the worst of it, then to join the victors in their pursuit of the vanquished. Thus had this matter been decided upon by the barbarians. [4] The Roman army came upon the Vandals encamped at Tricamarum, 150 stades distant from Carthage.[366] [5] So they both bivouacked there at a distance from one another. When it was well on in the night, the following prodigy occurred in the Roman camp. [6] The tips of their spears shone with a bright fire and their points seemed to be burning most vigorously. This was not seen by many, but it filled the few who did see it with anxiety, not knowing how it would turn out. [7] This happened to the Romans in Italy again at a much later time, but then they knew by experience that they could regard it as a sign of victory. Yet now, as I said, given that this was the first time it had happened, they were made anxious and passed the night in great fear.

[8] On the following day, Gelimer commanded the Vandals to place the women and children and all their possessions in the middle of the stockade, although it was not fortified and, calling all together, he spoke as follows:

Gelimer to the Vandals

> [9] It is not to gain glory or to retrieve the loss of empire alone, O fellow Vandals, that we are about to fight, so that, even if we chose to be cowards and sacrificed these belongings, we might still live by sitting at home and keeping our possessions. [10] You see, surely, that our fortunes have come to such a pass that, if we do not prevail over the enemy, we will, if we perish, leave them as masters of these our children and wives and land and all other possessions, while if we survive there will be added to this that we will be their slaves and see all of these enslaved too. [11] But if we overcome our foes in the war, we will, if we survive, live among all good things or, after a glorious end, there will be left to our wives and children the blessings of prosperity, while the name of the Vandals will endure and their empire be preserved. [12] If it has ever happened to any men to be engaged in a struggle for their all, we now more than any others realize that we are entering the battle line with our hopes for all that we have resting wholly upon ourselves. [13] Our fears are not for our bodies, then, nor is our danger death, but how not to be defeated by the enemy. For if we lose the victory, death will be to our advantage. [14] Given that matters stand so, let no one among the Vandals weaken, but let him proudly expose his body and, from shame at the evils that follow defeat, court the end of life. [15] When a man is ashamed of disgrace, he need never fear danger. Let no recollection of the previous battle enter your minds.[367] [16] It was not by cowardice on our part that we were defeated, but we tripped upon obstacles interposed by Fortune and were overthrown. But it is not the way of its tide to flow always in the same direction, but every day, as a rule, it tends to reverse itself.

366. Its exact location is unknown.

367. Cf. Brasidas in Thucydides, *History* 2.87.1–3.

[17] In manliness it is our boast that we surpass the enemy and that we are much superior in numbers, [18] for we believe that we surpass them no less than tenfold. I add that there are many and great incentives that now especially urge us on to valor, including the glory of our ancestors and the empire handed down to us by them. [19] But the former is obscured by our unlikeness to our kindred, while the letter is on the verge of fleeing from us as unworthy. [20] I pass over in silence the wails of these poor women and the tears of our children, by which, as you see, I am now so deeply moved that I am unable to continue my speech. [21] But having said this one thing, I will stop, that there will be for us no returning to these most dear possessions if we do not prevail over the enemy. [22] Remember these things, show yourselves brave men, and do not bring shame upon the fame of Geiseric.

[23] After speaking such words, Gelimer commanded his brother Tzazo to deliver an exhortation separately to the Vandals who had come with him from Sardinia. [24] He gathered them together a little apart from the camp, and spoke as follows:

Tzazo to his Vandal soldiers

For all the Vandals, fellow soldiers, the struggle is over those things that you just heard the king recount, but for you, in addition to all the rest, it so happens that you are competing with yourselves too. [25] For you have recently prevailed in a struggle for the maintenance of our rule, and you recovered the island for the empire of the Vandals. It is likely, therefore, that you will make a greater display of valor. [26] For those who are risking the greatest things must display the greatest eagerness for war. When men who struggle for the maintenance of their rule are defeated, if that should happen, they have not failed in the most vital part; [27] but when men are engaged in a battle for their all, their lives in every aspect adjust to the outcome of the struggle. Moreover, if you show yourselves brave men at the present time, you will thereby prove with certainty that the destruction of the tyrant Goda was an achievement of valor on your part. But if you weaken now, you will be deprived of even the renown of those deeds, as if it did not belong to you in the first place. [28] Yet even apart from this, it is reasonable that you will have an advantage over the rest of the Vandals in this battle. [29] For those who have failed are dismayed by their previous fortune, while those who have encountered no reverse enter the struggle with their courage unimpaired. [30] And this too, I think, is not inappropriate to say, that if we conquer the enemy, it will be you who will win the credit for the greatest part of the victory and you will be called saviors of the Vandal nation. [31] For men who achieve renown in company with those who have previously met with misfortune naturally claim the better fortune as their own. [32] Considering all these things, therefore, I say that you should urge the women and children who are lamenting their fate to take heart even now, you should summon God to fight with us, go with enthusiasm against the enemy, and lead the way for our compatriots into this battle.

3. After both Gelimer and Tzazo had spoken such exhortations, they led out the Vandals and, at about the time of lunch, when the Romans were not expecting them but were

preparing their meal, they were at hand and arrayed for battle along the bank of the river. [2] Now the river at that place is ever flowing, to be sure, but its current is so small that it is not even given a special name by the locals, being designated simply as a brook. [3] So the Romans came to the other bank of this river, after preparing as well as they could under the circumstances, and arrayed themselves as follows. [4] The left wing was held by Martinos, Valerianos, Ioannes, Kyprianos, Althias, Markellos, and as many others as were commanders of the *foederati*, while the right was held by Pappas, Barbatos, and Aïgan, and the others who commanded the forces of cavalry. [5] In the center Ioannes took up his position, leading the guardsmen and spearmen of Belisarios and carrying the general's standard. [6] Belisarios also came there just in time with his five hundred horsemen, leaving the infantry behind advancing at a walk. [7] For all the Huns had been arrayed in another place, it being customary for them even before this not to mingle with the Roman army, and at that time especially, as they had in mind the purpose that was previously explained,[368] it was not their wish to be arrayed with the rest of the army. Such, then, was the Roman formation. [8] On the side of the Vandals, either wing was held by the *chiliarchoi*,[369] each leading the division under him, while in the center was Tzazo, the brother of Gelimer, and behind him were arrayed the Moors. [9] Gelimer himself was going about everywhere exhorting them and urging them on to daring. The command had been previously given to all the Vandals to use neither spear nor any other weapon in this engagement except their swords.

[10] After a considerable time had passed and no one began the battle, Ioannes chose a few of those under him by the advice of Belisarios and, crossing the river, made an attack on the center, where Tzazo pushed them back and gave chase. [11] The Romans in flight returned to their army, while the Vandals in pursuit came as far as the stream, but did not cross. [12] Once more Ioannes, leading out more of the guardsmen of Belisarios, made a dash against the forces of Tzazo and, again being repulsed from there, withdrew to the Roman line. [13] And a third time with almost all the guardsmen and spearmen of Belisarios, he took the general's standard and made his attack with much shouting and a great noise. [14] The barbarians manfully withstood them and used only their swords, so the battle became fierce and many of the noblest Vandals fell, among them Tzazo himself, the brother of Gelimer. [15] Then at last the whole Roman army was set in motion, crossed the river, and advanced upon the enemy, and the rout, beginning at the center, became complete, for each unit easily routed those before them. [16] The Massagetai, seeing this, according to the agreement among themselves joined the Roman army in making the pursuit, but this pursuit did not last long. [17] For the Vandals entered their camp quickly and remained quiet, while the Romans, thinking that they would not be able to fight it out with them inside the stockade, stripped the corpses that had gold on them and withdrew to their own camp. [18] There perished in this battle fewer than fifty of the Romans but about eight hundred of the Vandals.

368. 4.2.3.

369. For this rank, see 3.5.18.

[19] When the infantry came up in the late afternoon, Belisarios moved as quickly as he could with the whole army and went against the Vandal camp. [20] Gelimer, realizing that Belisarios was coming against him immediately with his infantry and the rest of his army, without saying a word or giving any command leaped upon his horse and fled along the road leading to Numidia. [21] His kinsmen and a few of his servants followed him in utter shock, keeping quiet about what was taking place. [22] For some time it escaped the notice of the Vandals that Gelimer had run away, but when they all perceived that he had fled and the enemy were already plainly seen, then the men began to shout, the children cried, and the women wailed. [23] They neither took with them the money they had nor paid attention to the laments of those dearest to them, but every man fled in complete disorder however he could. [24] Coming up, the Romans captured the camp, money and all, with not a man in it. They pursued the fugitives throughout the whole night, killing the men upon whom they chanced, and enslaving the women and children. [25] They found in this camp a quantity of wealth such as has never before been found, at least in one place. [26] For the Vandals had plundered the Roman empire for a long time and had transferred great amounts of money to Libya; also, as their land was especially fertile, yielding abundant and most useful crops, it came about that the revenue collected from the goods produced there was not paid to any other country to purchase necessities, but those who possessed the land always kept the income from it for themselves, for the ninety-five years during which the Vandals ruled Libya. [27] From this it resulted that their wealth, amounting to an extraordinary sum, returned once more on that day into the hands of the Romans. [28] This battle and the pursuit and capture of the Vandals' camp happened three months after the Roman army came
533 to Carthage, at about the middle of the last month, which the Romans call December.

4. Then Belisarios, seeing the Roman army rushing about in confusion and great disorder, was disturbed and in fear throughout the night in case the enemy, by uniting and rallying against them, did them irreparable harm. [2] If this thing had happened at that time, I believe that not one of the Romans would have escaped to enjoy this booty. [3] For the soldiers were extremely poor men and, upon becoming all of a sudden masters of great wealth and of women both young and extremely attractive, were no longer able to restrain their minds or get enough of the things that they now had; they were so intoxicated, drenched as they were by their present good fortunes, that each one wished to turn around and take everything with him to Carthage. [4] They were going about, not in companies but alone or by twos, wherever hope led them, searching out everything roundabout among the valleys and the rough country and wherever there chanced to be a cave or anything that might bring them into danger or ambush.[370] [5] For neither did fear of the enemy nor respect for Belisarios occur to them, nor indeed anything else at all except the desire for spoils and, being overmastered by this, they came to disregard everything else. [6] Belisarios, considering all this, was at a loss how to handle the situation. [7]

370. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 2.52.3.

But at daybreak he took his stand upon a certain hill by the road, appealing to a discipline that no longer existed and heaping reproaches upon all, soldiers and officers alike. [8] Then indeed, those who chanced to be near, especially those who were of the household of Belisarios, sent their money and slaves to Carthage with their tent-mates and messmates, and themselves came up beside the general and obeyed the orders they were given.

[9] He commanded Ioannes the Armenian with two hundred men to follow Gelimer, to pursue him without slackening their speed either night or day until they took him, dead or alive. [10] And he sent word to his associates in Carthage to lead into the city all the Vandals who were sitting as suppliants in sanctuaries around the city, giving them pledges and taking their weapons so that they might not begin an uprising, and to keep them there until he himself should come. [11] With those who were left he went about everywhere and gathered the soldiers hastily, and to any Vandals he came upon he gave pledges for their safety. For it was no longer possible to catch any Vandal except as a suppliant in the sanctuaries. [12] He took their weapons and sent them, with soldiers to guard them, to Carthage, not giving them the opportunity to unite against the Romans. [13] When everything was as well settled as possible, he himself with the greater part of the army moved against Gelimer with all speed. [14] But Ioannes, after continuing the pursuit five days and nights, was already not far from Gelimer, in fact he was about to engage with him on the following day. But as it was not fated that Gelimer be captured by Ioannes, the following obstacle was contrived by Chance. [15] Among those pursuing with Ioannes it chanced that there was Viliarit, a spearman of Belisarios. [16] This man was vehement and well favored in strength of heart and body, but not a very serious man, and he generally took delight in wine and buffoonery. [17] On the sixth day of the pursuit, Viliarit, being drunk around sunrise, saw a bird sitting in a tree and he quickly stretched his bow and shot an arrow at the bird. [18] He missed the bird but accidentally hit Ioannes, who was behind it, in the neck. [19] The wound was mortal and he passed away a short time afterward, leaving great sorrow at his loss to the emperor Justinian and Belisarios, the general, and to all the Romans and Carthaginians. [20] For in manliness and every sort of virtue he was well-endowed, and he was gentle to those who came to him and equitable to a degree unsurpassed. Thus, then, Ioannes fulfilled his destiny. [21] As for Viliarit, when he came to his senses, he fled to a certain village that was nearby and sat as a suppliant in the sanctuary there. [22] The soldiers no longer pressed the pursuit of Gelimer but cared for Ioannes as long as he lived; when he died they carried out all the customary rites in his burial and, explaining everything to Belisarios, remained where they were. [23] As soon as he heard this, Belisarios came to Ioannes' tomb and bewailed his fate. [24] After weeping over him and grieving at the whole misfortune, he honored the tomb of Ioannes with many gifts and especially by providing for it a regular income. [25] However, he did nothing severe to Viliarit, as the soldiers said that Ioannes had enjoined upon them by the most formidable oaths that he was not to be punished, as he had not done the unholy deed with intent.

[26] Thus Gelimer escaped falling into the hands of the enemy that day. From then on Belisarios pursued him but, upon reaching a strong city of Numidia situated on the sea,

ten days distant from Carthage, which they call Hippo Regius, he learned that Gelimer had ascended the mountain Papua and could no longer be captured by the Romans. [27] This mountain is situated at the extremity of Numidia and is extremely steep and climbed only with the greatest difficulty (for lofty cliffs rise up toward it from every side).[371] On it dwell barbarian Moors, who were friends and allies to Gelimer, and an ancient city named Medeos lies on the outskirts of the mountain. [28] Gelimer was quiet there with his followers. As for Belisarios, he was not able to make any attempt at all on the mountain, far less in the winter, and, as his affairs were still unsettled, he did not think it advisable to be away from Carthage. So he chose out soldiers, with Fara as their leader, and set them to invest the mountain. [29] This Fara was energetic and thoroughly serious and virtuous in every way, although he was a Herul by birth. [30] It is hard for a Herul not to be treacherous and drunk but to strive after virtue, and so this merits abundant praise.[372] [31] It was not only Fara who maintained orderly conduct, but also all the Heruls who followed him. Belisarios, then, commanded this Fara to establish himself at the foot of the mountain during the winter and keep close guard, so that it would neither be possible for Gelimer to leave the mountain nor for any supplies to be brought in to him. Fara acted accordingly. [32] Then Belisarios raised up the Vandals who were sitting as suppliants in the sanctuaries of Hippo Regius—they were many, including nobles—gave them pledges, and sent them to Carthage under guard. And there it came about that the following happened to him.

[33] In the house of Gelimer there was a certain scribe named Bonifatius, a Libyan and native of Byzacium, a man extremely loyal to Gelimer. [34] At the beginning of this war Gelimer had put this Bonifatius on a swift ship and, placing in it all the royal treasure, commanded him to anchor in the harbor of Hippo Regius: if he saw that the situation was not favorable to their side, he was to sail with all speed to Spain with the money, and go to Theudis, the leader of the Visigoths, where he was expecting to find safety for himself also, should the fortune of war go against the Vandals. [35] So Bonifatius, as long as he felt hope for the cause of the Vandals, remained there; but as soon as the battle at Tricamarum took place, with all the other events that have been related, he spread his sails and sailed away just as Gelimer had directed him. [36] But an opposing wind brought him back, much against his will, into the harbor of Hippo Regius. As he had already heard that the enemy were somewhere near, he entreated the sailors with many promises to row with all their might for some other land or island. [37] But they were unable to do so, as a severe storm had fallen upon them and the waves of the sea were rising to a great height, seeing that it was the Tyrrhenian Sea, and then it occurred to them and to Bonifatius that, after all, God wished to give the money to the Romans and was not allowing the ship to put out. [38] Though they had scarcely got outside the harbor, they encountered great danger in bringing their ship back into anchorage. [39] When Belisarios arrived at Hippo Regius, Bonifatius sent some men to him. These he commanded to sit in a sanctuary and

371. Papua was probably on a peak of the Kroumirie (a mountainous region in northwest Tunisia, by the Algerian border).

372. For the Heruls, see 6.14.

say that they had been sent by Bonifatius, who had the money of Gelimer, but to conceal the place where he was until they received pledges from Belisarios that, upon handing over Gelimer's money, he himself would escape free from harm with all his possessions. [40] These men, then, acted accordingly, and Belisarios was pleased at the good news and did not decline to take an oath. [41] Sending some of his associates he took the treasure of Gelimer and released Bonifatius in possession of his own money, and also with an enormous sum that he had plundered from Gelimer's treasure.

5. When Belisarios returned to Carthage, he prepared all the Vandals so that at the opening of spring he might send them to Byzantion; and he sent out an army to recover for the Romans everything that the Vandals ruled. [2] First he sent Kyrillos to Sardinia with a great force and the head of Tzazo, as the islanders were not at all willing to yield to the Romans, fearing the Vandals and thinking that what was being said about the events at Tricamarum could not be true. [3] He ordered Kyrillos to send a part of the army to Corsica, and to recover that island, which had been previously subject to the Vandals, for the Roman empire. This island was called Kyrnos in early times, and is not far from Sardinia. [4] So he came to Sardinia and displayed the head of Tzazo to the inhabitants of the place, and he won back both islands and made them tributary to the Roman domain. [5] To Caesarea in Mauretania Belisarios sent Ioannes with an infantry unit that he usually commanded himself; this place is distant from Carthage a journey of thirty days for an active traveler, as one goes toward Cadiz and the west. It is situated upon the sea, being a great and populous city from ancient times. [6] Another Ioannes, one of his own guardsmen, he sent to the straits at Cadiz by one of the Pillars of Herakles, to take possession of the fort there that they call Septem. [7] To the islands near the point where the Ocean flows in, called Ibiza, Majorca, and Minorca by the natives, he sent Apollinarius, a native of Italy who had come while still a lad to Libya. [8] He had been rewarded with great sums of money by Hilderic, who was then ruler of the Vandals, and after Hilderic had been removed from office and was in prison, as was said in the previous book,[373] he came to the emperor Justinian with other Libyans who were active in the interests of Hilderic, to entreat his favor. [9] He joined the Roman expedition against Gelimer and the Vandals, and proved himself a brave man in this war and most of all at Tricamarum. As a result of his deeds there Belisarios entrusted to him these islands. [10] Later Belisarios sent an army also to Pudentius and Tattimuth at Tripolis, who were being pressed by the Moors there, and so strengthened the Roman position in that region.

[11] He also sent some men to Sicily to take the fortress in Lilybaeum, on the grounds that it belonged to the Vandals' kingdom, but he was repulsed from there, as the Goths were hardly willing to yield any part of Sicily, alleging that this fortress did not belong to the Vandals at all. [12] When Belisarios heard this, he wrote to the commanders who were there as follows:

373. 3.9.9.

Belisarios to the Goths in Lilybaeum

You are depriving us of Lilybaeum, a fortress of the Vandals, the slaves of the emperor, and are not acting justly nor in a way to benefit yourselves. You wish to bring upon your ruler, against his will and far as he is from the scene of these actions, the hostility of the great emperor, whose goodwill he has won with great effort. [13] Yet how could you not seem to be acting contrary to established practice, if you recently allowed Gelimer to hold the fortress but have decided to withhold from the emperor, Gelimer's master, the possessions of the slave? You, at least, good men, should not act thus. [14] Reflect that while it is the nature of friendship to overlook many faults, hostility does not tolerate even the smallest misdeeds but searches the past for every offense and does not permit its enemy to grow rich on what does not in the least belong to him. [15] Moreover, it fights to avenge the wrongs that it claims have been done to ancestors and, if it fails in the struggle, it suffers no loss of its own possessions, yet if it succeeds it teaches the vanquished to accede. [16] See to it, then, that you neither do us further harm nor suffer harm yourselves, nor make the great emperor an enemy to the Gothic nation, when it is your prayer that he be propitious toward you. [17] For be well assured that, if you lay claim to this fortress, war will be upon you immediately, not for Lilybaeum alone but for all possessions you claim as yours, although not one of them belongs to you.

[18] Such was the message of the letter. The Goths reported these things to the mother of Athalaric,[374] and, following that woman's instructions, made this reply:

Goths of Lilybaeum to Belisarios

[19] The letter you have written, most excellent Belisarios, carries sound admonition, but it pertains to some other people, not to us Goths. [20] There is nothing belonging to the emperor Justinian that we have taken and hold; may we never be so mad as to do such a thing! The whole of Sicily we claim because it is our own, and the fortress of Lilybaeum is but one of its promontories. [21] If Theoderic gave his sister, who was the consort of the king of the Vandals, one of the trading ports of Sicily for her use, this is nothing. [22] That fact cannot give a basis for any claim on your part. But you, general, would be acting justly toward us if you were willing to settle the dispute between us not as an enemy, but as a friend. [23] There is a difference: friends are accustomed to settle their disagreements by arbitration, but enemies by battle. [24] We, therefore, will refer this matter to the emperor Justinian to arbitrate however seems to him lawful and just. And we desire that the decisions you make will be as wise as possible, rather than as hasty as possible, and that you await the decision of your emperor.

Such was the message of the letter of the Goths. [25] Belisarios, reporting all this to the emperor, remained quiet until the emperor should inform him of his will.[375]

6. Now Fara, having by this time become weary of the siege for many reasons, and especially because of the winter, and at the same time thinking that the Moors there

374. I.e., Amalasuntha.

375. For the ensuing correspondence, see 5.3.17–30. On 13 April 534, Justinian issued detailed legislation concerning the governance of North Africa (*CJ* 1.27).

would not be able to stand in his way, made an attempt to ascend Papua with great zeal. He armed all his followers well and began the ascent. [2] But the Moors rushed to the defense and, as they were on steep ground that was hard to traverse, their efforts to hinder those making the ascent were easily successful. [3] Fara fought hard to force the ascent, but lost 110 of his men in this struggle, and he himself with the remainder was beaten back and withdrew. As a result he did not dare to attempt the ascent again, given that the situation was against him. He established as close a guard as possible, in order that those on Papua, being pressed by hunger, might surrender themselves, and he neither allowed them to run away nor anything to be brought in to them from outside. [4] Thus it came about that Gelimer and those about him, who were his nephews and cousins and other persons of high birth, experienced a misery that no one could describe in a way that equaled the facts. [5] For of all the nations we know the Vandals happen to be the most luxurious and the Moors the most hardy. [6] Since they gained possession of Libya, the Vandals began to indulge in baths, all of them, every day, and enjoyed a table loaded with all foods, the sweetest and best that the earth and sea produce. [7] They wore gold almost all the time and clothed themselves in Mede garments, which now they call "Seric."[376] They passed their time in theaters, hippodromes, and other pleasurable pursuits, above all in hunting. [8] They had dancers and mimes and all other things to hear and see that are of a musical nature or otherwise happen to be sight-worthy among men. [9] Most of them lived in garden parks, which were well supplied with water and trees. They had great numbers of banquets and they diligently studied all the arts of sex. [10] But the Moors live in stuffy huts,[377] in winter, summer, and every other time, never leaving them because of the snow or the heat of the sun or any other discomfort due to nature. [11] They sleep on the ground, with the prosperous among them, if it should so happen, spreading a fleece under themselves. [12] Moreover, it is not customary among them to change clothing with the season, but they wear a thick cloak and a rough shirt at all times. [13] They have neither bread nor wine nor any other good thing, but they take grain, either wheat or barley, and, without boiling it or grinding it into flour or barley-meal, they eat it in a manner not at all different from the animals. [14] As the Moors, then, were of such a sort, the followers of Gelimer, after living with them for a long time and changing the standard of living to which they had been accustomed to such a miserable existence, when at last even the necessities of life had failed, they held out no longer: death now seemed most sweet to them and slavery by no means disgraceful.

[15] When Fara learned this, he wrote to Gelimer as follows:[378]

> I too am a barbarian and am not used to writing and speaking, nor experienced in them. [16] But the things that I need to know as a man I have learned from the nature of things, and am now writing them to you. [17] What on earth has come *Fara to Gelimer*

376. Latin *serica*, silk from China (Seres).

377. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 2.52 (the Athenians during the plague).

378. These exchanges between Fara and Gelimer, and their underlying moral dynamic, are based on and invert Xenophon, *Hellenika* 4.1 (where Agesilaos tries to persuade Pharnabazos to escape from Persian slavery).

over you, dear Gelimer, that you have thrown not just yourself but your whole family too into this pit? Is it just so that you can avoid becoming a slave? [18] But this is nothing but youthful folly on your part, to cling so to liberty, as if it were worth having at the price of all this misery! [19] After all, don't you think that you are even now a slave to the most wretched of the Moors, as your only hope of being saved, in the best scenario, is in them? [20] Yet why would it not be better in every way to be a slave among the Romans, even as a beggar, than to lord it on Papua over the Moors? [21] But of course it seems to you the very height of disgrace to be a fellow slave with Belisarios! [22] Banish the thought, most excellent Gelimer. Are not we, who also are born of noble families, proud to serve an emperor? And indeed they say that it is the wish of the emperor Justinian to have you enrolled in the senate and grant you the highest honor, that of a patrician, and present you with lands both wide and good and with great sums of money, and that Belisarios is willing to ensure that you will have all these things, by giving you pledges. [23] As for all the miseries that Fortune has brought you, you are able to endure with fortitude whatever comes from her, knowing that you are but a man and these things are inevitable; [24] but if Fortune has intended to temper these adversities with some good, would you yourself refuse to accept this gladly? Or should we consider that the good gifts of Fortune are not just as inevitable as her undesirable gifts? But not even total fools think this. [25] It would seem that you have now lost your good judgment, baptized as you are in misfortune. [26] Indeed, discouragement tends to confound the mind and turns to folly. If, however, you can bear your own thoughts and not rebel against Fortune when she changes, you are in a position right now to choose everything that is to your advantage and to escape the evils that hang over you.

[27] When Gelimer had read this letter and wept bitterly over it, he wrote in reply as follows:

Gelimer to Fara

I am deeply grateful to you for the advice you have given me, and I also find it unbearable to be a slave to an enemy who has wronged me, from whom I pray God will exact justice, if he is propitious to me—an enemy who, although he had never experienced any harm from me either in deeds that he suffered or in words that he heard, found a pretext for an unprovoked war and reduced me to this misfortune, bringing Belisarios against me from I know not where. [28] Yet he too is a man and, although he is an emperor as well, it is not at all unlikely that something may befall him that he would not choose. [29] As for me, I have nothing else to write. For my present misfortune has robbed me of my thoughts. [30] Farewell, then, dear Fara, and send me a lyre, a loaf of bread, and a sponge, I beg you.

[31] When this reply was read by Fara, he was at a loss for some time, being unable to understand the final words of the letter, until the man who had brought it explained that Gelimer desired a loaf just to see it and eat it, given that from the time when he went up to Papua he had not set his eyes upon a single baked loaf. [32] He also needed a sponge for one of his eyes, which was irritated by lack of washing and was greatly swollen. [33] And, being a skillful harpist, he had composed an ode to his present misfortune, which he was eager to chant in a lament with tears to the accompaniment of

a lyre. [34] When Fara heard this, he was deeply moved and, lamenting the fortune of men, he did as was written and sent all the things Gelimer desired of him. But he did not relax the siege, keeping watch more closely than before.

7. Already a space of three months had been spent in this siege and the winter was coming to an end. Gelimer was afraid, suspecting that his besiegers would soon come up against him, and the bodies of most of the children related to him were discharging worms in this hardship. [2] And though in everything he was deeply distressed, and looked upon everything—except, that is, death—with dissatisfaction, he nevertheless endured the suffering beyond all expectation, until he happened to see this. [3] A Moorish woman had managed somehow to crush a little grain and, making of it a tiny cake, threw it into the hot ashes on the hearth. For thus it is the custom of the Moors to bake their loaves. [4] Beside this hearth two children were sitting, in extremely great distress because of their hunger, the one being the son of the woman who had thrown in the cake and the other a nephew of Gelimer. They were eager to seize the cake as soon as it seemed cooked to them. [5] Of the two children the Vandal got ahead of the other, snatched the cake, and, although it was still extremely hot and covered with ashes, hunger overpowered him and he threw it into his mouth and was eating it, when the other seized him by the hair of the head, struck him over the temple, then beat him again, and thus compelled him with great violence to spit out the cake that was already in his throat.[379] [6] This sad experience Gelimer could not endure (for he had watched all from the beginning), his resolve was broken, and he wrote as quickly as possible to Fara as follows:

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> [7] If it has ever happened to any other man, after enduring terrible misfortunes with resolve, to take a course contrary to what he had previously decided, consider me to be such a one, most excellent Fara. [8] For I remember your advice, which I am far from wishing to disregard. I cannot resist Fortune any further nor rebel against Fate, but I will now follow it wherever it seems to her best to lead. But I would receive the pledges, by which Belisarios guarantees that the emperor will do everything that you recently promised me. [9] For as soon as you give the pledges, I will put myself into your hands along with these kinsmen of mine and the Vandals, all who are here with us.

Gelimer to Fara

[10] That was what Gelimer wrote in this letter. Fara, having conveyed this to Belisarios along with what they had previously written to each other, begged him to declare as quickly as possible what his will was. [11] As soon as he had read the letter, Belisarios, who was greatly desirous of leading Gelimer alive to the emperor, became overjoyed and commanded Kyprianos, a leader of *foederati*, to go to Papua with some others, and directed them to give an oath concerning the safety of Gelimer and of those with him, and to swear that he would be honored before the emperor and would lack nothing. [12] When these men came to Fara, they went with him to a certain place by the foot of the mountain where Gelimer came at their summons and, after receiving the pledges just as he wished, he came with them to Carthage. [13] And it happened

379. Cf. Josephos, *The Jewish War* 5.10.3 (430).

that Belisarios was staying for a while in the suburb of the city that they call Aclas. [14] Gelimer came before him there, laughing with a laughter that was neither moderate nor the kind one can conceal, and some of those watching him suspected that the extremity of his suffering had caused him to become denatured and that, already beside himself, he was laughing for no reason. [15] But his friends would have it that the man had his wits about him, and that because he had been born into a royal family, ascended the throne, had been clothed with great power and immense wealth from childhood even to old age, then was driven to flight, plunged into great fear, had undergone the sufferings on Papua, and now had come as a captive, having in this way experienced all the gifts of fortune, both good and evil—for this reason, they believed, he thought that man's lot was worth nothing but much laughter. [16] Concerning this laughter of Gelimer's, let each one speak according to his judgment, whether enemy or friend. [17] But Belisarios, reporting to the emperor that Gelimer was a captive in Carthage, asked permission to bring him to Byzantion with him. At the same time he guarded him and all the Vandals in no dishonor and put the fleet in readiness.

[18] Now many other things too great to be hoped for have become real in the course of eternity, and they will continue to occur as long as the fortunes of men stay the same.[380] [19] For things that seemed to reason impossible are actually accomplished, and many times things that previously appeared impossible, when they become real, seem to be worthy of wonder. [20] But whether such events as these ever took place before I am not able to say, wherein the fourth descendant of Geiseric, his kingdom at the height of its wealth and military strength, was completely undone in so short a time by five thousand men coming in as invaders and having not a place to cast anchor. [21] For that was the number of horsemen who followed Belisarios and carried through the whole war against the Vandals. Whether this happened by chance or some kind of valor, one justly marvels at it. But I return now to the point from which I digressed.

8. So ended the Vandalic war. But Envy, as tends to happen in cases of extreme good fortune, was already swelling against Belisarios, although he provided no pretext for it. [2] For some of the officers slandered him to the emperor, charging him, without any grounds, with seeking to set up a kingdom for himself. [3] The emperor did not disclose this to the world, either because he paid no heed to the slander or because that course seemed better to him. [4] But he sent Solomon and allowed Belisarios to choose which of two options he desired, either to come to Byzantion with Gelimer and the Vandals, or to remain there and send them. [5] Belisarios, as it did not escape him that the officers were charging him with sedition, was eager to get to Byzantion in order to clear himself of the charge and proceed against his slanderers.[381] I will explain now how he learned of the attempt made by his accusers. [6] When those who slandered him wished to present this

380. A variation on Thucydides, *History* 3.82.2 (replacing "nature" with "fortune"); cf. 1.22.4.

381. At *Secret History* 18.9, Prokopios says that Justinian ordered Belisarios to return, accusing him of treason. *CJ* 1.27.2.15 (13 April 534) suggests that Justinian had "ordered" Belisarios to return.

slander, fearing that the man who was to carry their letter to the emperor would be lost at sea and so frustrate their plan, they wrote the accusation of revolt on two tablets, intending to send two messengers to the emperor in two ships. [7] One of the two sailed away without being detected but the second, on account of some suspicion or other, was captured in Mandracium and, putting the writing into the hands of his captors, he revealed what was being done. [8] Belisarios, having learned in this way, was eager to come before the emperor, as was said. Such, then, was the course of these events at Carthage.

[9] But the Moors who lived in Byzacium and Numidia turned to revolt for no reason whatsoever, and they decided to break the treaty and rise suddenly against the Romans. This was not out of keeping with their character. [10] For there is among the Moors neither fear of God nor respect for men. They care neither for oaths nor hostages, even if the latter happen to be the children or brothers of their leaders. [11] Nor is peace maintained among the Moors by any other means than by fear of the enemies opposing them. I will set forth how the treaty was made by them with Belisarios and how it was broken. [12] When the arrival of the emperor's fleet was imminent in Libya, the Moors, fearing that they might receive some harm from it, consulted the oracles of their women. [13] For it is not lawful in this nation for a man to utter oracles, but the women among them become possessed through some sacred rites and foretell the future, no less than any of the ancient oracles. [14] So on that occasion, when they made an inquiry, as I said, the women responded, "An army from the waters, the overthrow of the Vandals, destruction and defeat of the Moors, when a general of the Romans comes unbearded." [15] When the Moors heard this, as they saw that the emperor's army had come from the sea, they began to be in great fear and were unwilling to fight in alliance with the Vandals, but they sent to Belisarios and established peace, as I stated above.[382] Then they remained quiet, waiting to see how the future would turn out. [16] When the power of the Vandals was now at an end, they sent to the Roman army, investigating whether there was anyone in command among them who was unbearded. [17] When they saw all wearing full beards, they thought that the oracle did not indicate the present time to them but one many generations later, interpreting the oracle in the way that they wished. [18] Immediately, therefore, they were eager to break the treaty, but their fear of Belisarios prevented them. [19] For they had no hope that they would ever overcome the Romans in war, at least not with him present. [20] But when they heard that he was leaving with his guardsmen and spearmen, and that the ships were being filled with them and the Vandals, they suddenly took up arms and perpetrated every manner of outrage upon the Libyans. [21] For the soldiers were both few in each place along the frontier and still unprepared, so that they were unable to stand against the barbarians who were making inroads at every point, nor prevent their incursions, which were frequent and not overt. [22] Men were being killed indiscriminately and women with their children were being enslaved, and the wealth was being plundered from every part of the frontier and the whole country was

382. 3.25.3–9.

being filled with fugitives. These things were reported to Belisarios when he was just about to set sail. [23] As it was now too late for him to return, he entrusted Solomon with the administration of Libya and chose out the greatest part of his own guardsmen and spearmen, instructing them to follow Solomon and punish with all zeal and as quickly as possible the Moors who had risen up in revolt, and to exact vengeance for the injury done to the Romans. [24] The emperor sent another army also to Solomon with Theodoros the Kappadokian and Hildiger, who was the son-in-law of Antonina, the wife of Belisarios. [25] As it was no longer possible to find the taxes of the districts of Libya set down in documents, as the Romans had recorded them in former times, inasmuch as Geiseric had torn up and destroyed everything from the start, Tryphon and Eustratios were sent by the emperor, in order to assess the taxes on the Libyans, each according to his measure. But these men seemed to the Libyans neither moderate nor endurable.[383]

9. Upon reaching Byzantion with Gelimer and the Vandals, Belisarios was deemed worthy to receive the honors that in former times were assigned to those generals of the Romans who had won the greatest and most noteworthy victories. [2] A period of about six hundred years had now passed since anyone had attained these honors, except Titus and Trajan, and other emperors who had led armies against some barbarian nation and had been victorious.[384] [3] Belisarios displayed the spoils and slaves from the war in the midst of the city and led a procession that the Romans call a "triumph," not, however, in the ancient manner, but going on foot from his own house to the hippodrome and then again from the starting gates until he reached the place where the imperial box is. [4] There was booty, including whatever is set apart by custom for imperial service, thrones of gold and carriages in which it is customary for the emperor's wife to ride, and much jewelry made of precious stones, golden drinking cups, and all other things that serve for the imperial table. [5] There was also silver weighing many thousands of talents and all the royal treasure that was worth an extremely great sum (for Geiseric had despoiled the palace in Rome, as has been said in the preceding book).[385] Among these were the treasures of the Jews, which Titus, the son of Vespasian, together with certain others, had brought to Rome after the capture of Jerusalem.[386]

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383. Cf. also *Secret History* 18.9–10 for the fiscal maladministration of North Africa.

384. The last non-imperial triumph was held to have been celebrated by L. Cornelius Balbus in 19 BC for his victory over the Garamantes in Africa.

385. 3.5.3.

386. Titus captured Jerusalem in 70 AD, and the spoils are depicted on the Arch of Titus, where Prokopios saw them, and described by Josephos, *The Jewish War* 7.5.3–6 (119–57), where he may have read about them. Before Geiseric, part of the Jewish spoils were taken from Rome by the Goths in 410; see 5.12.42. Some of the jewels from the triumph were used later in the coronation of Justin II (Corippus, *In Praise of Justin II* 2.125).



The spoils of the Temple of Jerusalem in the triumph of Vespasian and Titus, 71 AD; depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome.

[6] One of the Jews, upon seeing these things, approached one of the emperor's associates and said: "I think it is inexpedient to place these treasures in the palace in Byzantion. [7] Indeed, it is not possible for them to be elsewhere than in the place where Solomon, the king of the Jews, placed them. [8] It is because of them that Geiseric captured the palace of the Romans, and why the Roman army has now captured that of the Vandals." [9] When this was brought to the emperor's ears, he became afraid and quickly sent everything to the sanctuaries of the Christians in Jerusalem. [10] There were slaves in the triumph, among whom was Gelimer himself, wearing a purple garment upon his shoulders, and all his family and as many of the Vandals as were very tall and fair of body. [11] When Gelimer reached the hippodrome and saw the emperor sitting upon a lofty seat and the people standing on either side, and realized as he looked about in what an evil plight he was, he neither wept nor cried out, but ceased not repeating the words of the Hebrew scripture, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."[387] [12] When he came before the emperor's box, they stripped off the purple garment and compelled him to fall prone on the ground and do obeisance to the emperor Justinian. Belisarios also did this, as being a suppliant of the emperor along with him. [13] The emperor Justinian and empress Theodora presented the children of Hilderic and his offspring and all those of the family of the emperor Valentinian with sufficient sums of

387. Ecclesiastes 1.1–2; cf. "I gathered to me gold and silver, and the treasure of kings and lands" (2.8), and "I saw the place of judgment, and wickedness was there; and on the place of righteousness, impiety was there" (3.16). Pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.17c, claims that a Persian ambassador was present at this celebration (cf. 1.26.2–3 above for Chosroes' subsequent knowledge of the riches gained).

money, and to Gelimer they gave lands not to be despised in Galatia and permitted him to live there together with his family. [14] However, Gelimer was not enrolled among the patricians, as he was unwilling to convert from the faith of Arius.

[15] A little later the triumph was celebrated by Belisarios in the ancient manner
1 Jan. 535 also. For it chanced that he advanced to the office of consul and therefore was borne aloft by the captives, and as he was thus carried in his curule chair he threw to the populace those very spoils of the Vandalic war. [16] For the people carried off the silver plate, golden girdles, and a vast amount of the Vandals' other wealth as a result of Belisarios' consulship, and it seemed that after a long interval of disuse an old custom was being revived.[388] These things, then, took place in Byzantion in that way.

10. Solomon took over the army in Libya, but given that the Moors had risen against him, as was said above,[389] and that everything was in suspense, he was at a loss how to treat the situation. [2] For it was reported that the barbarians had destroyed the soldiers in Byzacium and Numidia and that they were pillaging and plundering everything there. [3] But what shocked both him and all Carthage most of all was the fate of Aïgan the Massagetes and Rouphinos the Thracian in Byzacium. [4] Both were of great repute in the household of Belisarios and the Roman army, one of them, Aïgan, being among the spearmen of Belisarios, while the other, being the most courageous of all, was assigned to carry the standard of the general in battle, an officer whom the Romans call a *bandifer*. [5] Now at that time these two men were commanding detachments of cavalry in Byzacium, and when they saw the Moors plundering everything before them and making all the Libyans captives, they waited in a narrow pass with their followers for those who were conveying the booty, killed them, and took away all the captives. [6] When this was reported to the commanders of the barbarians, Koutzinas, Esdilasas, Iourphouthes, and Medisinissas, who were not far from this pass, they moved against them with their whole army in the late afternoon. [7] The Romans, being few and shut off in a narrow place in the midst of many thousands, were not able to fight off their assailants. For wherever they might turn, they were always being shot at from behind. [8] Then Rouphinos and Aïgan with some few men ran to the top of a rock that was nearby and from there defended themselves against the barbarians. [9] As long as they were using their bows, the enemy did not dare to come directly to a hand-to-hand struggle with them, but kept hurling javelins at them. But when all the arrows of the Romans were exhausted, the Moors closed with them and so they defended themselves with swords as well as the circumstances permitted. [10] But they were overpowered by the multitude of the barbarians: Aïgan fell there with his whole body hacked to pieces,

388. Possibly in response to this event, with *Novel* 105 (of 536 or 537), Justinian tried to limit the largess dispensed by the consuls, claiming that the expense was too high. After 541 he ceased appointing regular consuls. At *Secret History* 26.15, Prokopios complained that Justinian effectively abolished the consulship and so this largess did not flow to the people. Ioannes Lydos argued that the abolition of the consulship marked the final end of Roman freedom (*On the Magistracies* 2.8).

389. 4.8.9.

and Rouphinos was seized by the enemy and led away. [11] But immediately one of the commanders, Medisinissas, fearing that he might escape and again make trouble for them, cut off his head and, taking it to his home, showed it to his wives, for it was a remarkable sight on account of its extraordinary size and abundance of hair. [12] As the narration of events has now brought me to this point, it is necessary to go back and explain from where the nations of the Moors came to Libya and how they settled there.

[13] When the Hebrews had left Egypt and had come near the boundaries of Palestine, Moses, a wise man who led them on the journey, died, and the leadership passed to Joshua,[390] the son of Nun, who led this people into Palestine. By displaying a valor in war greater than is natural for a man, he gained possession of the land. [14] After overthrowing all the nations he easily won the cities and seemed to be altogether invincible. [15] Now at that time the whole country along the sea from Sidon as far as the boundaries of Egypt was called Phoenicia. [16] In ancient times one king ruled over it, as is agreed by all who have written the earliest accounts of the Phoenicians. [17] In that country there lived very populous tribes, the Gergesites, Jebusites, and some with other names by which they are called in the history of the Hebrews.[391] [18] When this people, then, saw that the invading general was irresistible, they emigrated from their ancestral homes and moved to Egypt, which adjoined their country. [19] Finding there no place sufficient for them to live in, given that there has been a great population in Egypt from ancient times, they proceeded to Libya. [20] They established numerous cities and took possession of the whole of Libya as far as the Pillars of Herakles, and they have lived there even up to my time, using the Phoenician tongue. [21] They also built a fortress in Numidia, where now is the city called Tigisis. [22] In that place are two stelae made of white stone near the great spring, having Phoenician letters cut in them which say in the Phoenician tongue: "We are they who fled from before the face of Joshua, the robber, the son of Nun."[392] [23] There were also other

390. His name in Greek is the same for Jesus, *Iesous*.

391. I.e., the Canaanites of the Old Testament. A list including these names is given by Josephos, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.6.2 (139).

392. Prokopios seems to have thought that the Moors spoke Phoenician (Punic), which many of them might have done (at *Buildings* 6.3.9 he says that the Moors were Phoenicians). In the third century, the Christian chronographer Julius Africanus claimed that the Canaanites fled "from the face of the sons of Israel and settled in Tripolis in Africa" (in Georgios Synkellos, *Chronicle* 50 [tr. p. 65]). A contemporary, Hippolytos of Rome, wrote in his *Chronicle* that Africans and Phoenicians were descended from Canaanites, and that the islands by Spain were inhabited by Canaanites who had fled from Joshua, the son of Nun. The last claim entered the chronicle tradition and was reproduced in the seventh-century Constantinopolitan *Paschal Chronicle*. Most experts do not regard this inscription as authentic, assuming that it is not a fabrication. Prokopios does not claim to have seen it, nor does it seem that he went near that area. From him it was copied by many later writers, including in the Armenian tradition. The expression "from the face of" is a Semitism found only here in Prokopios; it is probably derived from Joshua 5.1 (which, in the Septuagint, refers to the "kings of the Phoenicians" rather than "of the Canaanites") and 10.10, probably via Julius Africanus. Kosmas Indikopleustes, *Christian Topography* 5.53–54, saw Nabataean inscriptions which he took to be written in Hebrew by the followers of Moses.

nations settled in Libya before the Moors, who on account of having been established there from ancient times were called autochthonous. [24] Because of this they said that Antaios, their king, who wrestled with Herakles in Clipea, was a son of the earth.[393] [25] In later times those who left from Phoenicia with Dido came to the inhabitants of Libya as to kinsmen, and the latter willingly allowed them to found and hold Carthage. [26] But as time went on Carthage became a powerful and populous city.[394] [27] A battle took place between them and their neighbors, who, as was said, had come from Palestine before them and are called Moors today, and the Carthaginians defeated them and forced them to live far from Carthage. [28] Later on the Romans prevailed over all of them in war and settled the Moors at the edges of the inhabited land of Libya, making the Carthaginians and other Libyans subject and tributary to themselves. [29] Later on the Moors won many victories over the Vandals and gained possession of the land now called Mauretania, which extends from Cadiz to the boundaries of Caesarea, as well as most of the rest of Libya. Such, then, is the story of the settlement of the Moors in Libya.

11. When Solomon heard what had happened to Rouphinos and Aïgan, he prepared for war and wrote as follows to the leaders of the Moors:

Solomon to the Moors

> [2] In the past it has happened to other men that they lost their senses and were destroyed, men who had no means of knowing in advance how their bad judgment would turn out. [3] But as for you, who have an example near at hand in your neighbors, the Vandals, what in the world has come over you that you have decided to raise your hands against the great emperor and throw away your own security? [4] And that too when you have given the most dread oaths in writing and have handed over your children as guarantees for the agreement? [5] Have you decided to make a kind of display of the fact that you have no regard either for God or good faith or kinship itself or safety or any other thing at all? [6] Yet if this is how you treat the divine, in what ally do you put your trust in marching against the emperor of the Romans? [7] If you are taking the field to the destruction of your children,[395] what in the world is it that you hope to gain by endangering yourselves? [8] If any regret has already entered your hearts for what has taken place, write to us so that we can set things right. But if your madness has not yet abated, expect a Roman war, which will come upon you together along with the oaths that you have violated and the wrong that you are doing to your own children.

[9] Such was the letter that Solomon wrote. The Moors replied as follows:

Moors to Solomon

> Belisarios deluded us with great promises and so persuaded us to become subjects of the emperor Justinian. But the Romans, while giving us no share in any good

393. Antaios was the Libyan giant who drew his strength from contact with his mother, Ge (Earth). He was lifted off the ground and killed by Herakles.

394. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 6.3.2, on Epidamnos.

395. I.e., the hostages, who could now be killed; see 3.25.4, 4.8.10.

> thing, expected to have us as their friends and allies, although we are pressed with hunger. [10] Therefore it is more fitting that you, rather than the Moors, should be called faithless. [11] For the men who break treaties are not those who, when wronged, bring accusations openly against their neighbors and turn away from them, but those who expect to keep others in faithful alliance and then do them violence. [12] Men make God their enemy not when they march against others in order to recover their own possessions but when they transgress upon the possessions of others in entering into the dangers of war. [13] As for children, that will be your concern, who are required to have only one wife; but with us, who have, it may be, fifty wives living with each of us, the making of children is not an issue.

[14] When Solomon read this letter, he decided to lead his whole army against the Moors. Arranging matters in Carthage, he went with his entire army to Byzacium. [15] When he reached the place called Mammes, where the four Moorish commanders, whom I mentioned just above,[396] were encamped, he made a stockade.[397] [16] There are tall mountains at that place and a level space near the foothills of the mountains, where the barbarians had made preparations for the battle and arranged their order as follows. [17] They formed a circle of their camels, just as, in a previous book, I said Kabaon did,[398] making the front about twelve deep. [18] They placed the women with the children within the circle (for among the Moors it is customary to take a few women, with their children, to battle, and these make the stockades and huts for them, tend the horses skillfully, take charge of the camels and the food, [19] sharpen the iron weapons, and generally take on many of the labors involved in campaigning). The men took their stand on foot in between the legs of the camels, with shields, swords, and small spears that they are accustomed to hurl like javelins. Some of them with their horses remained quietly in the mountains. [20] Solomon placed no one against one-half of the circle of the Moors, that which was toward the mountain. [21] For he feared that the enemy on the mountain might come down and those in the circle would turn around, so the men drawn up there would be exposed to attack on both sides in the battle. [22] But against the remainder of the circle he drew up his whole army and, as he saw most of them frightened and without courage, on account of what had happened to Aïgan and Rouphinos, and wishing to exhort them to take heart, he spoke as follows:[399]

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> [23] Men who have campaigned with Belisarios, let no fear of these men enter you, and if Moors gathered to the number of fifty thousand have defeated five hundred Romans, you should not consider this a precedent. [24] Recall your own valor, and consider that while the Vandals defeated the Moors, you have mastered the Vandals in war without effort, so that it is not

Solomon to the Roman army

396. 4.10.6.

397. The site is tentatively identified with a plain between Jebel Ousselat and Jebel Cherichira.

398. 3.8.25–26.

399. This exchange of speeches alludes to that before the battle of Naupaktos in Thucydides, *History* 2.86–90.

right for those who have conquered the more formidable foe should cringe before the lesser one. [25] Indeed, of all men the Moorish nation seems to be the worst when it comes to fighting in war. [26] Most of them have no armor and those who have shields have only small ones that are not well made and are not able to deflect attacks. [27] They throw those two small spears and, if that does not accomplish anything, they spontaneously turn to flight. [28] So that it is possible for you, if you withstand the barbarians' first onset, to win the victory with no trouble at all. [29] As to your equipment of arms, you see, of course, how great the difference is between it and that of your opponents. [30] Apart from this, you also have valor of heart, strength of body, experience in war, and confidence because you have already conquered all your enemies. But the Moors, lacking all these things, trust only in their own multitude. [31] But it is easier for a few who are most excellently prepared to conquer a multitude of men who are not good at warfare than it is for the multitude to defeat them. [32] While a good soldier derives his confidence from himself, the cowardly man generally finds that the sheer number of those deployed with him places him in a dangerously compact situation. [33] Furthermore, you should despise these camels, which cannot fight for the enemy and, when struck by our missiles, will likely cause much confusion and disorder among them. [34] The eagerness for battle which the enemy have acquired on account of their former success will be your ally in the fight. [35] For daring, when it is commensurate with one's strength, may be of some benefit to those who use it, but when it exceeds that it leads into danger. [36] Bearing these things in mind and despising the enemy, maintain silence and discipline; for by minding these things we will prevail over the disorder of the barbarians more easily and with less effort.

That is what Solomon said.

[37] The leaders of the Moors also, seeing the barbarians terrified at the orderly formation of the Romans and wishing to restore their army to confidence, exhorted them in this way:

leaders of the Moors to their army

[38] That the Romans have human bodies, the kind that give way when struck with iron, we have learned, O fellow soldiers, from those of them whom we have recently encountered, the best of them all in fact, some of whom we overwhelmed with our spears and killed, while the others we seized and made our prisoners of war. [39] That being so, we can see now that we also boast great superiority over them in numbers. [40] Furthermore, the struggle for us involves the very greatest things, either to be masters of all Libya or to be slaves to these braggarts. [41] So it is necessary for us to be brave in the highest degree at the present time. It is not advantageous for those whose all is at stake to be anything other than extremely courageous. [42] It is also appropriate for us to despise the equipment the enemy have. For if they come on foot against us, they will not be able to move rapidly but will be worsted by the speed of the Moors, while their cavalry will be terrified by the sight of the camels, while the noise they make, rising above the din of battle, will likely throw them into disorder. [43] So if

> anyone, by taking into consideration the victory of the Romans over the Vandals, thinks that they are invincible, he is mistaken in his judgment. [44] For the scales of war are such as to be turned by the valor of the commander or by chance. Belisarios, who was responsible for their defeat of the Vandals, has now, thanks to that Higher Power, been removed out of our way. [45] Besides, we too have often conquered the Vandals, stripping them of their power, and thereby we made victory over them a more feasible and easier task for the Romans. [46] Now we have reason to hope that we will conquer this enemy too if you show yourselves brave men in the struggle.

[47] After the leaders of the Moors had delivered this exhortation, they began the engagement. At first there arose great disorder in the Roman army. [48] For their horses were disturbed by the noise and sight of the camels, and reared up and threw off their riders, most of whom fled in complete disorder.[400] [49] In the meantime the Moors were making sallies and hurling all the small spears they had in their hands, thus causing the army to be filled with tumult; they were hitting the Romans while the latter were still unable either to defend themselves or remain in position. [50] But Solomon, observing what was happening, leaped down from his horse first and made all the others do the same. [51] When they had dismounted, he commanded the others to stand still and, holding their shields before them and receiving the missiles of the enemy, to remain in position. He himself, leading forward not fewer than five hundred men, attacked that part of the circle. [52] He commanded these men to draw their swords and kill the camels which stood at that point. [53] Then the Moors who were stationed there rushed to flee, and the men under Solomon killed about two hundred camels, and immediately, when the camels fell, the circle opened up to the Romans. [54] They advanced on the run into the middle of the circle where the women of the Moors were sitting. The barbarians were overwhelmed and withdrew to the mountain that was nearby and, as they fled in complete disorder, the Romans followed behind and killed them. [55] It is said that ten thousand Moors perished in this encounter, while all the women together with the children were made slaves. [56] The soldiers secured as booty all the camels they had not killed. Thus the Romans with all their plunder went to Carthage to celebrate the festival of the triumph.

12. But the barbarians, moved with anger, again marched in a body against the Romans, leaving behind not one of their number, and began to overrun the land by Byzacium, sparing none of any age who fell into their hands. [2] When Solomon had just marched into Carthage it was reported that the barbarians with a great host had come into Byzacium and were plundering everything there. He therefore departed quickly with his whole army and went against them. [3] When he reached Bourgaon,[401] where the enemy were encamped, he remained some days in camp over against them, in order

400. Cf. the Lydian horses in Herodotos, *Histories* 1.80.

401. Its exact location is unknown.

that, as soon as the Moors should come down onto level ground, he might begin the battle. [4] But as they stayed on the mountain, he marshaled his army and arrayed it for battle. The Moors, however, had no intention of ever again engaging in battle with the Romans in level country (for already an irresistible fear had come over them), but on the mountain they hoped to overcome them more easily. [5] Now Mount Bourgaon is for the most part precipitous and on the eastern side extremely difficult to ascend, but on the west it is easily accessible and rises in an even slope. [6] There are two lofty peaks that rise up, forming between them a sort of vale, very narrow but of incredible depth. [7] The barbarians left the peak of the mountain unoccupied, thinking that on this side no hostile movement would be made against them, and they left equally unprotected the space about the foot of the mountain where Bourgaon was easy of access. [8] But they made their camp near the middle of the ascent and remained there, in order that, if the enemy were to ascend and begin battle with them, they might at the outset, being on higher ground, shoot down upon their heads. [9] They also had many horses up on the mountain, prepared either for flight or pursuit, if they won the battle.

[10] When Solomon saw that the Moors were no longer willing to fight on level ground, and also that the Roman army was distressed at the prospect of making a siege in a desert place, he was eager to come to blows with the enemy on Bourgaon. [11] But as he saw that the soldiers were intimidated by the sheer multitude of their opponents, which was many times greater than in the previous battle, he called together the army and spoke as follows:

Solomon to the Roman army

[12] The fear that the enemy feel toward you needs no other indictment but voluntarily pleads guilty, adducing the testimony of its own witnesses. [13] For you see, surely, our opponents gathered in so many tens and tens of thousands, but not daring to come down to the plain and engage with us, unable to feel confidence even in themselves but seeking refuge in the difficulty of this place. [14] It is thus not even necessary to address any exhortation to you, at the present time at least. For those to whom both circumstances and the weakness of the enemy give courage, do not require, I believe, the additional assistance of words. [15] But of one thing it is necessary to remind you, that if we fight this engagement with brave hearts, all that will be left for us, who have defeated the Vandals and reduced the Moors to the same fortune, will be to enjoy all the good things of Libya, with no concern for more war in mind. [16] As for preventing the enemy from shooting down upon our heads, and providing that no harm come to us from the nature of the place itself, leave that to me.

[17] After making this exhortation Solomon commanded Theodoros, who led the *excubitores* (for thus the Romans call their guards), to take with him a thousand infantry toward the end of the afternoon and, with some of the standards, to go up secretly on the east side of Bourgaon, where the mountain is most difficult of ascent, in fact almost impassable. He ordered him that, when they arrived near the crest of the mountain, they were to remain quietly there and pass the night, and then at sunrise they should appear above the enemy, display the standards, and begin to shoot. [18] Theodoros did

as directed. When it was well on in the night, they climbed up the precipitous slope and reached a point near the peak without being noticed either by the Moors or even by any of the Romans; [19] for they were being sent out, it was said, as an advance guard, to prevent anyone from coming to the camp from the outside to do harm. At early dawn Solomon with the whole army went up against the enemy to the outskirts of Bourgaon. [20] And when morning had come and the enemy were seen near at hand, the soldiers were completely at a loss, seeing the summit of the mountain no longer unoccupied, as formerly, but covered with men who were displaying Roman standards; for already some daylight was beginning to show. [21] When those on the peak began their attack, the Romans perceived that the army was their own and that the barbarians had thereby been placed between enemy's forces. Being shot at from both sides and unable to defend themselves against the enemy, they thought no more of putting up a fight but turned, all of them, to a hasty flight. [22] As they could neither run up to the top of Bourgaon, which was held by the enemy, nor go to the plain anywhere over the lower slopes of the mountain, as their opponents were pressing upon them from that side, they went with a rush into the vale and the unoccupied peak, some with their horses, others on foot. [23] But given that they were a numerous throng fleeing in great fear and confusion, they kept killing each other and, as they fell into the vale, which was very deep, those who were in front were being killed constantly but their plight could not be perceived by those coming up behind. [24] When the vale became full of dead horses and men and the bodies made a passage from Bourgaon to the other mountain, the remainder were saved by crossing over the bodies. [25] There perished fifty thousand among the Moors in this battle, as the survivors claimed, but no one at all among the Romans, nor did anyone receive even a wound either from the enemy or an accident happening to him, but they all enjoyed this victory unscathed. [26] All of the leaders of the barbarians also escaped, except Esdilasas, who received pledges and surrendered himself to the Romans. [27] So great, however, was the multitude of women and children whom the Romans seized as booty, that they would sell a Moorish boy for the price of a sheep to anyone who wished to buy. [28] Then the remainder of the Moors recalled the oracle of their women, that their nation would be destroyed by a beardless man.[402] [29] So the Roman army, together with its booty and with Esdilasas, marched into Carthage, and those of the barbarians who had not perished decided that it was impossible to establish themselves in Byzacium, in the case that they, being few, were treated with violence by the Libyans who were their neighbors, and so with their leaders they went into Numidia and made themselves suppliants of Iaudas, who ruled the Moors in the Aurès. [30] The only Moors who remained in Byzacium were those led by Antalas, who during this time had kept faith with the Romans and had remained unharmed together with his subjects.

13. While these things were happening in Byzacium, Iaudas, who ruled the Moors in the Aurès, leading more than thirty thousand fighting men, was plundering the land

402. 4.8.14; see 3.11.6 for Solomon's castration.

of Numidia and enslaving many of the Libyans. [2] Now it so happened that Althias in Centuriae was keeping guard over the forts there and, being eager to take from the enemy some of their captives, went outside the fort with the Huns who were under his command, to the number of about seventy. [3] Reasoning that he was not able to fight against such a great multitude of Moors with only seventy men, he wished to occupy some narrow pass so that, while the enemy were marching through it, he might be able to snatch up some of the captives. [4] As there are no such roads there, because flat plains extend in every direction, he devised the following. [5] There is a city nearby named Tigisis, then an unwalled place but having a large spring in a very narrow place. [6] Althias therefore decided to take possession of this spring, reasoning that the enemy, compelled by thirst, would surely come there, for there is no other water at all close by. [7] Now it seemed to all who considered the disparity of the armies that his plan was insane. [8] But the Moors came up feeling exhausted, greatly oppressed by the heat of the summer, and naturally almost overcome by an intense thirst, and they made for the spring with a great rush, not thinking that they would meet any obstacle. [9] But when they found the water held by the enemy, they all halted, at a loss what to do, for they had already spent the greatest part of their strength in their desire for water. [10] Iaudas therefore had a parley with Althias and agreed to give him a third of the booty if the Moors could all drink. [11] Althias was not willing to accept the proposal, demanding that he fight with him in single combat for the booty. [12] This challenge was accepted by Iaudas, and it was agreed that if it so fell out that Althias was overcame, the Moors would drink. [13] The whole Moorish army rejoiced, being in good hope, as Althias was lean and not tall of body, whereas Iaudas was the finest and most warlike of all the Moors. [14] Both of them were, as it happened, mounted. Iaudas hurled his spear first, but as it was coming toward him Althias unexpectedly managed to catch it with his right hand, stunning Iaudas and the enemy. [15] With his left hand he drew his bow instantly, for he was ambidextrous, and hit and killed the horse of Iaudas. [16] After he fell, the Moors brought another horse for their leader, upon which Iaudas leaped and immediately fled, and the Moorish army followed him in complete disorder. [17] And Althias, by thus taking from them the captives and the whole of the booty, won a great name for this deed throughout all Libya. Such, then, was the course of these events.

[18] Solomon spent a short time in Carthage and then led his army toward the Aurès mountains and Iaudas, alleging against him that, while the Roman army was occupied in Byzacium, he had plundered many of the places in Numidia. And this was true. [19] Solomon was also urged on against Iaudas by other leaders of the Moors, Massonas[403] and Ortaïas, because of their personal enmity: Massonas because Iaudas had treacherously slain his father, Mephanias, who was Iaudas' father-in-law, and Ortaïas because Iaudas, together with Mastinas, who led the barbarians in Mauretania, had intended to drive him and all the Moors whom he ruled from the land where they had lived from

403. Massonas may have been identical with Masuna, attested epigraphically in 508 as "King of the Moors and the Romans."

of old. [20] So the Roman army, under the leadership of Solomon, and as many of the Moors as were allied with them, encamped by the river Abigas that flows by the Aurès and irrigates the land there. [21] But to Iaudas it seemed inexpedient to array himself against the enemy in the plain, and he prepared on the Aurès in a way that seemed to him would offer the most difficulty to his assailants. [22] This mountain is about thirteen days' journey distant from Carthage, and the largest of all known to us. [23] For its circuit is a three days' journey for an active traveler[404] and, for one wishing to go upon it, the mountain is difficult of access and extremely wild, but as one ascends and reaches level ground, plains emerge and many springs that form rivers and a great many wonderful parks. [24] The grain that grows here and the fruit are double the size of that produced in the rest of Libya.[405] [25] There are fortresses also here, but they are neglected because they do not seem necessary to the inhabitants. [26] For ever since the Moors took the Aurès from the Vandals,[406] not a single enemy had until now ever come there or caused the barbarians to fear that they would come, but even the populous city of Timgad, situated against the mountain on the east at the beginning of the plain, was emptied of its population by the Moors and razed to the ground, so that an enemy could not encamp there or have the city as an excuse for coming near the mountain. [27] The Moors of that place held also the land to the west of the Aurès, which was both extensive and fertile. [28] Beyond them dwelt other nations of the Moors, ruled by Ortaïas, who had come as an ally to Solomon and the Romans, as was stated above.[407] [29] And I have heard this man say that beyond the country that he ruled no people lived, but desert land extended to a great distance, and beyond that there are men but not black-skinned like the Moors, rather very white in body and blonde. So much, then, for these things.

[30] After giving the Moorish allies great sums of money and earnestly exhorting them, Solomon ascended the Aurès with the whole army arrayed for battle, thinking that on that day he would do battle with the enemy and have the matter out with them, however fortune decreed. [31] Accordingly, the soldiers did not take with them any food, except a little, for themselves and their horses. [32] After advancing over rough ground for about fifty stades, they made a bivouac. [33] Covering a similar distance each day they came on the seventh day to a place where there was an ancient fortress and an ever flowing stream. The place is called "Shield Mountain" by the Latins in their own tongue.[408] [34] Now it was reported to them that the enemy were encamped there, and when they reached this place and encountered no enemy, they made camp and, preparing

404. This is the first mention of the mountain in ancient literature (under the name *Aurasion*). As for making its circuit in three days, Prokopios is evidently referring here to a particular peak of this range.

405. Prokopios copied this description of the Aurès in *Buildings* 6.7.2–5.

406. 3.8.5.

407. 4.13.19.

408. I.e., Clipea in Latin. It is presumably not the same place as in 4.10.24, possibly the Jebel Chélia.

themselves for battle, remained there; they spent three days in that place. [35] As the enemy kept entirely out of their way and they ran out of supplies, the thought came to Solomon and the whole army that there had been some plot against them by the Moorish allies, [36] for the latter were not unacquainted with the conditions of travel on the Aurès and probably understood the enemy's plans. They were secretly going out to meet them each day, it was said, and had also frequently been sent to them by the Romans to reconnoiter, whereupon they had decided to make only false reports in order to deprive the Romans of the advance knowledge they would need to make the ascent of the Aurès mountains with supplies for a longer time and to generally prepare themselves in the best way. [37] All things considered, the Romans were suspicious that an ambush had been set for them by men who were their allies and so they began to be afraid, reasoning that the Moors are generally said to be faithless by nature, especially when they march as allies with the Romans or any others against Moors. [38] Thinking about these things, and at the same time being pressed by hunger, they withdrew from there with all speed without accomplishing anything. Upon reaching the plain, they constructed a stockade.

[39] After this Solomon established part of the army in Numidia to serve as a guard and went to Carthage with the remainder, as it was already winter. [40] There he arranged
536 and set everything in order, so that at the beginning of spring he might again march against the Aurès with more equipment and, if possible, without Moors as allies. [41] At the same time he prepared generals and another army and fleet of ships for an expedition against the Moors who live on the island of Sardinia. [42] This island is large and flourishing, being about two-thirds as large as Sicily (for the perimeter of the island makes a journey of twenty days for an active traveler). It lies between Rome and Carthage and was oppressed by the Moors who lived there. [43] For the Vandals in former times, being enraged against these barbarians, sent a few of them with their wives to Sardinia and confined them there. [44] But as time went on they seized the mountains near Cagliari, at first making plundering expeditions secretly upon those who lived around there but, when they became no fewer than three thousand, they even made their raids openly and, with no desire for concealment, plundered all the country there, being called Barbaricini by the natives.[409] [45] It was against these Moors, therefore, that Solomon was preparing the fleet during that winter. Such, then, was the course of events in Libya.

14. In Italy during this same time the following events took place. Belisarios was sent against Theodahad and the Gothic nation by the emperor Justinian and, sailing to Sicily he secured this island with no trouble. [2] The way in which this was done will be told in a following book, when my account leads me to the history of events in Italy. [3] For it has not seemed to me out of order to record first all the events that happened in Libya and after that to turn to the account of Italy and the Goths. [4] During this winter, then, Belisarios remained in Syracuse and Solomon in Carthage. [5] It came about during this

409. Barbagia is a mountainous area of inland Sardinia. These people (though without the explanation of their identity) are mentioned by Justinian in his instructions to Belisarios in *CJ* 1.27.2.3.

year that a most dread portent took place. During the whole year the sun gave forth its light without brightness, like the moon, and it seemed extremely like the sun in eclipse, for the beams it emitted were not clear nor like those it usually makes.[410] [6] From the time when this thing happened men were free neither from war nor pestilence nor any other thing that brings death. It was the time when Justinian was in the tenth year of his reign.

[7] At the opening of spring, when the Christians were celebrating the feast they call Easter, there occurred a mutiny among the soldiers in Libya. I will now tell how it arose and how it ended. [8] After the Vandals had been defeated in battle, as I have told previously, the Roman soldiers took their daughters and wives and made them their wives. [9] Each one of these women kept urging her husband to lay claim to possession of the lands that she had owned previously, saying that it was not right if, while living with the Vandals, they had enjoyed these lands, but after entering into marriage with their conquerors they were then to be deprived of their own possessions. [10] With these things in mind, the soldiers did not think that they were bound to yield the lands of the Vandals to Solomon, who wished to register them as belonging to the public and to the emperor's household; he said that while it was not unreasonable that the slaves and all other things of value should go as booty to the soldiers, the land itself belonged to the emperor and the empire of the Romans, which had nourished them and caused them to both become and be called soldiers not so that they might then claim for themselves any land that they might take from the barbarians who were trespassing on the Roman empire, but so that this land might come to the public, from which both they and all others secured their maintenance.[411] [11] This was one cause of the mutiny. There happened also to be a second, concurrent one, which was no less, perhaps even more, effective in throwing all Libya into confusion, and it was as follows. [12] In the Roman army there were, it happened, not fewer than one thousand soldiers of the Arian faith, most of whom were barbarians and some of the Herul nation. [13] Now these men were especially urged on to the mutiny by the priests of the Vandals. It was not possible for them to worship God in their accustomed way, but they were excluded from all their sacraments and sacred rites, [14] for the emperor Justinian did not allow any Christian who did not espouse the orthodox faith to receive baptism or any other sacrament. [15] Most of all they were agitated by the Easter feast, during which they found themselves unable to baptize their own children with sacred water, or do anything else pertaining to this feast.[412] [16] And *536*

410. This was the famous Dust Veil event of 536–537, recorded in many contemporary sources from Ireland to China. It was possibly caused by a volcanic eruption, and led to a lowering of temperatures.

411. The imperial confiscation of Vandal lands is not mentioned in an extant law. *Novel* 36 (of 535) provides for the return of land seized by the Vandals from the North Africans.

412. In 527, Justinian had exempted Gothic Arians in the Roman army from the penalties imposed on heretics (*CJ* 1.5.12.17). There were no such exemptions in the law by which he outlawed Arians in North Africa and decreed the return of all ecclesiastical properties to the Catholic Church (*Novel* 37 of 535). For the persecution of Arians in general, see *Secret History* 11.16–18, 18.10.

as if these things were not sufficient for that Evil Power in its eagerness to destroy the fortunes of the Romans, yet another piece of ammunition fell into the hands of those who were planning the mutiny. [17] For the Vandals whom Belisarios took to Byzantion were placed by the emperor in five cavalry squadrons, in order that they might be settled permanently in the cities of the east. He called them the "Justinianic Vandals" and ordered them to be conveyed in ships to the east. [18] Now most of these Vandal soldiers reached the east and, filling up the squadrons to which they had been assigned, have been fighting the Persians up to the present time. But the rest, about four hundred in number, after reaching Lesbos, overpowered the sailors when the sails were bellied with the wind and sailed on to the Peloponnese. [19] Setting sail from there, they landed in Libya at a desert place, where they abandoned the ships and, after equipping themselves, went up to the Aurès mountains and Mauretania. [20] Elated by their arrival, the soldiers who were planning the mutiny formed an even closer conspiracy among themselves. [21] There was much talk about this in the camp and oaths were already being taken. When they were about to celebrate the festival, the Arians, angry at their exclusion from the rites, became even more vehement.

[22] Their leading men decided to kill Solomon in the sanctuary on the first day
23 Mar. 536 of the feast, which they call a Great Day. [23] They were not found out, as no one disclosed the plan. For though there were many in on the horrible plot, no word of it was divulged to any hostile person as the orders were passed around, and thus they succeeded completely in escaping detection, for even many of the spearmen and guardsmen of Solomon and most of his servants were on the side of the mutiny out of desire for the lands. [24] When the appointed day came, Solomon was sitting in the sanctuary, utterly ignorant of the evils hanging over him. [25] Those who had decided to kill the man went in and, urging one another with nods, grasped their swords but did nothing, either because they were filled with awe of the rites then being performed in the sanctuary, or because the fame of the general caused them to be ashamed, or perhaps some divine power prevented them. [26] When the rites on that day had been performed and all were going home, the conspirators began to blame one another for having gone soft at the wrong time, and they postponed the plot for a second attempt on the following day. [27] On the next day they acted in the same manner and departed from the sanctuary without doing anything and, entering the marketplace, they reviled each other openly, each man calling the next a softhearted demoralizer of the band, not hesitating to censure strongly the respect that was felt for Solomon. [28] For this reason, they thought that they could no longer remain in Carthage without danger, inasmuch as they had disclosed their plot to everyone. [29] Most of them, accordingly, went out of the city quickly and began to plunder the lands and to treat as enemies all the Libyans whom they met; but the rest remained in the city, giving no indication of what their own intentions were but pretending ignorance of the plot.

[30] Solomon, upon hearing what was being done by the soldiers in the country, became greatly disturbed and did not cease from exhorting those in the city, urging them to loyalty toward the emperor. [31] At first they seemed receptive to his words,

but on the fifth day, when they heard that those who had gone out were secure in their rebellion, they gathered in the hippodrome and insulted Solomon and the other commanders without restraint. [32] Theodoros the Kappadokian was sent there by Solomon to dissuade them and win them over by kind words, but they listened to nothing that he said. [33] Now this Theodoros had a certain grievance against Solomon and was suspected of plotting against him. [34] For this reason the rebels immediately elected him general over them by acclamation, and with him they went quickly to the palace in arms and raising a great ruckus. [35] There they killed a different Theodoros, the commander of the guards, a man of the greatest excellence in every respect and an especially capable warrior. [36] Having tasted this blood, they began to kill everyone they met, whether Libyan or Roman, if he were an associate of Solomon or had money in his hands. Then they turned to plundering, going up into the houses that had no soldiers to defend them and seizing all valuables until the coming of night; finally, the drunkenness that followed upon their hard labors made them stop. [37] Solomon succeeded in escaping unnoticed to the great sanctuary that is in the palace, and Martinos joined him there in the late afternoon. [38] When all the rebels were sleeping, they exited the sanctuary and came to the house of Theodoros the Kappadokian, who compelled them to dine though they had no desire to do so, and conveyed them to the harbor and put them on the skiff of a certain ship, which happened to have been made ready there by Martinos. [39] Prokopios also, who wrote this history, was with them, as were about five men of the house of Solomon. [40] And after traversing three hundred stades they reached Misuas, the shipyard of Carthage, and, given that they had reached safety, Solomon immediately commanded Martinos to go into Numidia to Valerianos and the others in command there and to bring it about that each one of them, if it were at all possible, should appeal to some of the soldiers known to him, either with money or other means, and lead them back to loyalty toward the emperor. [41] He sent a letter to Theodoros, charging him to govern Carthage and handle the other matters as seemed possible to him, and he himself with Prokopios went to Belisarios at Syracuse. [42] After reporting everything to him that had taken place in Libya, he begged him to come with all speed to Carthage and defend the emperor, who was suffering unholy treatment at the hands of his own soldiers. That, then, was what Solomon did.

15. The rebels, after plundering everything in Carthage, gathered in the plain of Bulla and chose Stotzas, one of Martinos' spearmen and a passionate and energetic man, as tyrant over them, with the intention of driving the emperor's commanders out of all Libya and thus gaining control over it. [2] He armed the whole force, amounting to about eight thousand men, and led them against Carthage, thinking to win over the city instantly with no trouble. [3] He also contacted the Vandals who had escaped from Byzantion with the ships and those who had not followed Belisarios to begin with, either because they had escaped notice or because those who were taking off the Vandals at that time paid no attention to them. [4] Now they were not fewer than a thousand, and they soon joined Stotzas and the army with enthusiasm. A great throng

of slaves also came to him. [5] When they drew near Carthage, Stotzas sent orders that the people should surrender the city to him as quickly as possible, on condition that they would remain free from harm. [6] But those in Carthage and Theodoros, in reply to this, refused and announced that they were guarding Carthage for the emperor. [7] They sent to him Ioseph, the secretary of the emperor's guards, a man of no humble birth from the household of Belisarios, who had recently been sent to Carthage on some mission to them, and they demanded that Stotzas go no further in his violence. [8] But Stotzas, upon hearing this, immediately killed Ioseph and commenced a siege. Those in the city, becoming terrified at the danger, were thinking of surrendering themselves and Carthage to Stotzas on terms. Those, then, were the events regarding the army in Libya.

[9] Belisarios selected one hundred men from his own spearmen and guardsmen and, taking Solomon with him, sailed into Carthage with one ship at about dusk, at the time when the besiegers were expecting that the city would be surrendered to them on the following day. With that expectation, they had bivouacked for that night. [10] But when day had come and they learned that Belisarios was present, they broke up camp as quickly as possible and disgracefully beat a hasty retreat in complete disorder. [11] Belisarios gathered about two thousand of the army and, after urging them with words to be loyal to the emperor and encouraging them with large gifts of money, he began the pursuit of the fugitives. [12] He overtook them at the city of Membresa, 350 stades distant from Carthage. [13] There both armies made camp and prepared for battle, the forces of Belisarios making their entrenchment at the river Bagradas, and the others in a high and difficult position. [14] For neither of them decided to enter the city, as it was without walls. [15] On the following day they joined battle, the rebels trusting in their numbers, and the soldiers of Belisarios despising their enemy as both foolish and leaderless. [16] Belisarios, wanting these thoughts to be firmly lodged in the minds of his soldiers, called them all together and spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman army

The situation, fellow soldiers, falls far short of our hopes and prayers both for the emperor and the Romans. [17] For we have now come to a combat in which even the winning of a victory will not be without tears for us, as we are fighting against kinsmen and comrades. [18] Still, we have this comfort in our misfortune, that we did not ourselves start this fight but have been brought into it in our own defense. [19] For he who has plotted against his dearest friends and by his deeds has dissolved ties of kinship, dies not, if he perishes, by the hands of friends: having become an enemy, he is but paying the price to those who have suffered wrong. [20] That our opponents are public enemies, barbarians, and whatever worse name one might call them, is shown not just by Libya, which has become plunder under their hands, nor by the inhabitants of this land, who have been wrongfully slain, but also by the multitude of Roman soldiers whom these hostiles have dared to kill, although they had but one fault to charge them with—loyalty to the republic. [21] We have come now to avenge their victims, and it is with good reason that we are now enemies of those who were once most dear. [22] For it is not because of nature that men are either friends or opponents

of one another, but rather because of the actions of each, either by an agreement that leads them to unite in alliance or by a difference of opinion that creates hostility, and this makes them friends or enemies as the case may be. [23] This suffices to show to you that we are fighting against vile enemies, and now I will make it plain that they deserve to be despised by us. [24] For a throng of men united by no law but brought together by injustice is hardly able to perform bravely, as virtue cannot cohabit with lawlessness, but always shuns those who are unholy.[413] [25] Nor, indeed, will they preserve discipline or follow the commands given by Stotzas. [26] For when a tyranny is newly established and still lacks the authority that stems from self-confidence, it is, of necessity, looked down upon by its subjects. [27] Nor is it honored by loyalty, for a tyranny is a hated thing; nor does it lead its subjects by fear, for fear strips it of the benefits of frank speech. [28] So when the enemy is handicapped in virtue and discipline, their defeat is at hand. Therefore, as I said, we should go against this enemy with great contempt. [29] For it is not by the numbers of the combatants, but by their orderly array and bravery, that prowess in war is measured.

[30] So spoke Belisarios. And Stotzas exhorted his soldiers as follows:

Stotzas to his soldiers

Men, you who with me have escaped slavery to the Romans, let no one of you count it unworthy to die on behalf of freedom, the freedom you have won by your courage and virtues. [31] For it is not as terrible a thing to grow old and die in the midst of evils as it is to have gained freedom from oppressive conditions and then have to return to them again. [32] The interval gives one a taste of relief and makes the misfortune, naturally enough, harder to bear. [33] This being so, it is necessary for you to recall that after conquering the Vandals and Moors you yourselves have enjoyed the labors of war while others have become masters of all the spoils. [34] And consider that, as soldiers, you will be required to spend all your lives in the dangers of war, either on behalf of the emperor, if, indeed, you are again to be his slaves, or on behalf of your own selves, if you preserve this present liberty. [35] Whichever of the two is preferable, it is in your power to choose, either by becoming fainthearted at this time or by preferring to fight bravely. [36] Furthermore, this thought also should come to your minds, that if, having taken up arms against the Romans, you come under their power, you will not find moderate or indulgent masters, but you will suffer extremes of punishment and, what is more, you will not die unfairly. As for death, then, to whomsoever of you it comes in this battle, it is plain that his will be a glorious one; [37] and as for life, if you conquer the enemy, it will be independent and in all respects happy. But if you are defeated, I need mention no other bitterness than this, that all your hope will depend upon the mercy of those men. [38] The conflict is not evenly matched in regard to strength. [39] Not only are the enemy greatly surpassed by us in numbers, but they will come against us without the least enthusiasm, for I think that they are praying for a share of our freedom.

413. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 351c–e.

Such was the speech of Stotzas.

[40] As the armies moved to engage, a wind both violent and troublesome in the extreme began to blow in the faces of the rebels of Stotzas. [41] For this reason they thought it disadvantageous for them to fight the battle where they were, fearing that the wind by its overpowering force might carry the missiles of the enemy against them, while the impetus of their own missiles would be seriously checked. [42] They therefore picked up and moved at a cross-angle, reasoning that, if the enemy also changed front, as they probably would so as not to be attacked from behind, the wind would then be in their faces. [43] But Belisarios, upon seeing that they had broken up their ranks and were in disorder, moving to his flank, gave orders immediately to open the attack. [44] Stotzas' men were confused by the unexpected move and, in great disorder, they fled precipitately as each one could, and only when they reached Numidia did they regroup. [45] Few of them, however, died in this action, and most of them were Vandals. [46] For Belisarios did not pursue them, deeming it sufficient if the enemy, having been defeated for the present, got out of his way; for his army was quite small. [47] He gave to the soldiers the enemy's stockade to plunder, and they took it with not a man inside. But much money was found there and many women, the very ones responsible for this war.[414] After accomplishing this, Belisarios marched back to Carthage. [48] And someone coming from Sicily reported to him that a mutiny had broken out in the army and was about to throw everything into confusion, unless he himself returned to them with all speed and prevented it. [49] He therefore arranged matters in Libya as well as he could and, entrusting Carthage to Hildiger and Theodoros, went to Sicily.

[50] The Roman commanders in Numidia, hearing that Stotzas' men had come and were gathering there, prepared for battle. These commanders were as follows: of the *foederati*, Markellos and Kyrillos; of the cavalry forces, Barbatos; and of the infantry, Terentios and Sarapis. [51] All, however, obeyed Markellos, who was the governor of Numidia. [52] When he heard that Stotzas with a few men was in a place called Gazophyla, about two days' journey distant from Constantina, he wanted to anticipate the gathering of all the rebels and led his army swiftly against them. [53] When the two armies were near and battle was about to commence, Stotzas came alone into the midst of his opponents and spoke as follows:

Stotzas to the Roman army

[54] Fellow soldiers, you are not acting justly in marching against kinsmen and comrades and in raising arms against men who have decided to make war upon the emperor and the Romans because we are aggrieved at *your* misfortunes and the wrongs *you* have suffered. [55] Or do you not remember that you have been deprived of the pay owed to you for a long time back, and that you have been stripped of the enemy's spoils, which the law of war sets as prizes for the dangers of battle? [56] And that others have claimed the right to live sumptuously for the rest of their lives from the good things of victory, while you have followed as if their servants? [57] If, now, you are angry against me, it is within your power to

414. 4.14.9.

vent your wrath upon this body, and to escape the pollution of killing the others; but if you have no charge to bring against me, it is time for you to take up weapons on your own behalf.

[58] So spoke Stotzas; and the soldiers listened to his words and greeted him with great favor. [59] When the commanders saw what was happening, they withdrew in silence and took refuge in a sanctuary in Gazophyla. Stotzas combined both armies into one and went to the commanders. Finding them in the sanctuary, he gave them pledges and then killed them all.

16. When the emperor learned this, he sent his nephew Germanos, a patrician, with a *536*
few men to Libya. [2] Symmachos also and Domnikos, men of the senate, followed him, the former to be prefect and in charge of expenses, while Domnikos was to command the infantry army. For Ioannes, who had held that office, had already died of disease.[415] [3] When they sailed into Carthage, Germanos counted the soldiers whom they had and, upon looking over the books of the secretaries where the names of all the soldiers were registered, he found that a third of the army was in Carthage and the other cities while all the rest were arrayed with the tyrant against the Romans. [4] He did not, therefore, begin any fighting, but paid the greatest attention to the army. Considering that those left in Carthage were kinsmen or tent-mates of the enemy, he kept addressing many winning words to all, and in particular said that he had himself been sent by the emperor to Libya to defend the soldiers who had been wronged and punish those who had initiated injustices against them. [5] When this was found out by the rebels, they began to come over to him a few at a time. Germanos received them into the city in a friendly manner, offered them pledges, held them in honor, and gave them their pay for the time during which they had been in arms against the Romans. [6] When word of this circulated and came to all, they began now to detach themselves in large numbers from the tyrant and to march to Carthage. [7] Then at last Germanos, hoping that in battle he would be evenly matched in strength with his opponents, began to make preparations for the conflict.

[8] But in the meantime Stotzas, already perceiving the trouble, and fearing that the *537*
army would be reduced even more by the defection of more of his soldiers, was pressing for a decisive encounter immediately and pushing vigorously for war. [9] As he had some hope regarding the soldiers in Carthage, that they would come over to him, and thought that they would readily defect if he came near them, he held out this hope to all his men. After encouraging them greatly in this way, he advanced quickly with his entire army against Carthage. [10] When he had come within thirty-five stades of the city, he made camp not far from the sea, and Germanos, after arming his whole army and arraying them for battle, marched forth. [11] When they were all outside the city, as he had heard what Stotzas was hoping for, he called together the whole army and spoke as follows:

Germanos to the Roman army

[12] There is nothing, fellow soldiers, with which you can justly reproach the emperor and no fault that you can find with what he has done to you:

415. For this Ioannes, see 3.11.8 and possibly 4.5.5.

this, I think, no one could deny. [13] It was he who gathered you together in Byzantion when you came in from the fields with your pouches and a thin cloak apiece, and has made you so powerful that the Roman state now depends upon you. [14] Yet not only has he been outrageously insulted, he has suffered the most harmful things at your hands, as you yourselves doubtless know full well. [15] Desiring that you preserve the memory of these things forever, he has dismissed the accusations against you for your crimes, asking that this debt alone be paid to him from you: the shame for what you have done. [16] It is reasonable, therefore, that you, being thus regarded by him, should reconfirm your loyalty and correct your former ingratitude. [17] For when those who have done wrong repent at the right time, it tends to make those who have been injured indulgent; and timely service tends to wash away the label of ingratitude. [18] It would be good for you to know well this also, that if at the present time you show yourselves completely loyal to the emperor, no memory will remain of what has gone before. [19] For all actions are always characterized by men in accordance with their final outcome. While a wrong, once committed, can never be undone for the rest of time, still, when it is corrected by better deeds on the part of those who committed it, it receives the reward of a decent silence and is generally forgotten. [20] Moreover, if you disregard your duty in dealing with these accursed men now, even if afterward you fight many wars on behalf of the Romans and often win the victory over the enemy, you will never again be regarded as having requited the emperor as you can today. [21] For those who win applause in the very matter of their former wrongdoing always gain for themselves a more plausible justification. As regards the emperor, then, let each one of you think in that way. [22] As for me, I have not initiated any injustice against you, have displayed my goodwill to you with all my power, and now, facing this danger, I have decided to ask this much of you all: let no man advance with us to the enemy against his judgment. [23] But if anyone of you wants to array himself with them, then without delay let him go with his weapons to the enemy army, granting us this one favor, that it be not secretly, but openly, that he has decided to harm us. [24] Indeed, it is for this reason that I am making my speech not in Carthage but after coming to the battlefield, in order not to block anyone who wants to desert to our opponents, as it is possible for all to show their disposition toward our republic without danger.

[25] So spoke Germanos. A great uproar erupted from the Roman army, for each soldier demanded the right to be the first to display to the general his loyalty to the emperor and to swear the most dread oaths in confirmation.

17. For some time the two armies remained in position opposite each other. But when the rebels saw that nothing of what Stotzas had predicted was actually happening for them, they began to fear that they had been unexpectedly cheated of their hope, and they broke ranks and withdrew, marching off to Numidia, where their women and the money from their looting were. [2] Germanos also came there with the whole army not long afterward, making all preparations in the best way possible and also bringing

along many wagons for the army. [3] Overtaking his opponents at a place which the Romans call Scalae Veterae,[416] he made preparations for battle in the following manner. [4] Placing the wagons in line facing the front, he arrayed all the infantry along them under the leadership of Domnikos, so that, having their rear in security, they might fight with greater confidence. [5] The best of the cavalry and those who had come with him from Byzantion he himself had on the left of the infantry, while all the others he placed on the right wing, not marshaled in one body but in three divisions. [6] Hildiger led one of them, Theodoros the Kappadokian another, while the remaining one, which was larger, was commanded by Ioannes, the brother of Pappos, with three others. Thus did the Romans array themselves. [7] The rebels took a stand opposite them, not in order, however, but scattered like barbarians. [8] At no great distance many thousands of Moors followed them, who were commanded by a number of leaders, including Iaudas and Ortaïas. [9] But not all of them, as it happened, were loyal to Stotzas and his men, for many had communicated earlier with Germanos and agreed that, when they came into the fight, they would array themselves with the emperor's army against the enemy. [10] Germanos could not trust them completely, for the Moorish nation is faithless to all men by nature. [11] It was for this reason also that they did not array themselves with the rebels, but stayed behind, waiting to see what would happen, in order to join the victors in the pursuit of the vanquished. [12] Such was the purpose, then, of the Moors, in following behind and not mingling with the rebels. [13] When Stotzas came close to the enemy and saw the standard of Germanos, he exhorted his men and moved against him. [14] But the rebel Heruls who were arrayed about him did not follow and even tried with all their might to prevent him, saying that they did not know the nature of Germanos' forces, but they did know well that those arrayed on the enemy's right would not withstand them. [15] If, then, they advanced against these, they would not only give way themselves and turn to flight, but would also, in all probability, throw the rest of the Roman army into confusion. But if they attacked Germanos and were driven back and routed, their entire cause would be ruined on the spot. [16] Stotzas was persuaded by these words and permitted the others to fight with the men of Germanos, while he himself with the best men went against Ioannes and those arrayed with him. [17] They failed to withstand the attack and rushed to flee in complete disorder. The rebels seized all their standards immediately and pursued them as they fled at top speed, while some too charged against the infantry, who had already begun to break their ranks. [18] But at this juncture Germanos himself, drawing his sword and urging the whole army there to do the same, with great difficulty routed the rebels opposed to him and advanced on the run against Stotzas. [19] As he was joined in this effort by the men of Hildiger and Theodoros, the two armies mingled in such a way that, while the rebels were pursuing some of their enemy, they were being overtaken and killed by others. [20] As the confusion became greater and greater, the

416. The ms. gives various readings of this name, which is here restored. Corippus, *Iohannis* 3.317, calls the place Cellas Vatari.

men of Germanos, who were in the rear, pressed on still more, and the rebels, falling into great fear, thought no longer of resistance. [21] But neither side could be distinguished either by their own comrades or by their opponents. For all used one language and the same equipment of arms, and they differed neither in figure nor in dress nor in any other way whatever. [22] For this reason the soldiers of the emperor by the advice of Germanos, whenever they captured anyone, asked him who he was; and if he said that he was a soldier of Germanos, they ordered him to give the watchword of Germanos, and if he was unable to give it, they killed him instantly. [23] In this struggle one of the enemy got by unnoticed and killed the horse of Germanos, and Germanos himself fell to the ground and came into danger, but his guards quickly saved him by enclosing him and putting him on another horse.

[24] As for Stotzas, he succeeded in this commotion in escaping with a few men. But Germanos, urging on his men, went straight for the enemy's camp. [25] There he was encountered by those of the rebels who had been stationed to guard the stockade. [26] A fierce fight broke out around its entrance and the rebels almost managed to force back their opponents, but Germanos sent some of his followers with orders to attack the camp at another point. [27] As no one was defending the camp at this place, they got inside the stockade with little trouble. [28] The rebels, upon seeing them, rushed off into flight and Germanos with the rest of the army gained entry into the enemy's camp. [29] There the soldiers, finding it easy to plunder the money, paid no attention to the enemy nor obeyed their general's orders, given that booty was at hand. [30] Hence Germanos, fearing that the enemy might regroup and come at them, took a stand with some men at the entrance of the stockade, uttering many laments and urging his disobedient men to return to good order. [31] Many of the Moors, when the rout had taken place in this way, were now pursuing the rebels and, arraying themselves with the emperor's army, were plundering the camp of the vanquished. [32] But Stotzas, at first having confidence in the Moorish army, rode to them to renew the battle. [33] But perceiving what was being done, he barely managed to escape with a hundred men. [34] Again, many gathered around him and attempted to engage the enemy but, being repulsed no less decisively than before, if not even more so, they all went over to Germanos. [35] Stotzas alone with a few Vandals withdrew to Mauretania and, marrying the daughter of one of the rulers, remained there. This was the conclusion of that rebellion.

537–539 **18.** Now there was among the spearmen of Theodoros the Kappadokian a certain Maximinos, an extremely sinister man. [2] This Maximinos got most of the soldiers to join with him in a conspiracy against the government, intending to set up a tyranny. [3] Being eager to associate with himself still more men, he explained the project to others, including Asklepiades, a native of Palestine, who was a man of good birth and the first among the associates of Theodoros. [4] Asklepiades, after conversing with Theodoros, immediately reported the whole matter to Germanos. [5] And he, not wishing while affairs were still unsettled, to begin any other disturbance, decided to get the best of the

man by flattering him rather than by punishment, and to bind him by oaths to loyalty toward the government. [6] Accordingly, as it was an old custom among all Romans that no one could become a spearman of one of the officers unless he had first taken the most dread oaths and given pledges of his loyalty toward both his own commander and the emperor of the Romans, he summoned Maximinos and, praising him for his daring, appointed him one of his spearmen from then on. [7] Overjoyed at this extraordinary honor, and conjecturing that this would facilitate his project, he took the oath and, although from that time forth he was counted among the spearmen of Germanos, he did not hesitate to disregard his oaths immediately and to promote his plans to gain a tyranny much more than ever. [8] Now the whole city was celebrating a certain festival and many of the conspirators of Maximinos at about the time of lunch came according to their agreement to the palace, where Germanos was entertaining his friends at a feast, and Maximinos took his stand beside the couches with the other spearmen. [9] As the drinking proceeded, someone entered and announced to Germanos that many soldiers were standing in great disorder before the door of the court, putting forward the charge that the government owed them pay for a long period. [10] He commanded the most loyal of his spearmen secretly to keep close watch over Maximinos, to prevent him from perceiving what was being done. [11] Then the conspirators with threats and a ruckus proceeded on the run to the hippodrome, and those who shared their plan with them gathered gradually from their houses and were assembling there. [12] And if it had so chanced that all of them had come together, no one, I think, would have been able easily to suppress their force; [13] but, as it was, Germanos anticipated this and, before the greater part had yet arrived, he sent against them all who were loyal to himself and to the emperor. [14] They attacked the conspirators, who were not expecting them. Given that Maximinos was not with them—they were waiting for him to begin the battle—and as they did not see the crowd that they thought would gather to help them, but instead even beheld their fellow soldiers unexpectedly fighting against them, they consequently lost heart and were easily overcome in the battle and rushed to flee in utter disorder. [15] Their opponents slew many of them and also captured many alive and brought them to Germanos. [16] Those, however, who had not yet come to the hippodrome gave no indication of their sentiment toward Maximinos. [17] Germanos did not see fit to seek them out, but he inquired whether Maximinos, as he had sworn the oath, had taken part in the plot. [18] When it was proved that he had carried on his designs still more than before, even though he numbered among his own spearmen, Germanos impaled him near the walls of Carthage, and in this way succeeded completely in putting down the sedition. As for Maximinos, then, such was the end of his plot.

19. The emperor summoned Germanos together with Symmachos and Domnikos and again entrusted all Libya to Solomon, in the thirteenth year of his reign. He provided *539*
him with an army and officers, among whom were Rouphinos and Leontios, the sons of Zaunas, the son of Pharesmanas, and Ioannes, the son of Sisiniolos. [2] For Martinos

and Valerianos had already before this been summoned to Byzantion. [3] Solomon sailed to Carthage and, having rid himself of the sedition of Stotzas, he ruled with moderation and guarded Libya securely, setting the army in order, sending to Byzantion and to Belisarios any suspicious elements that he found in it, enrolling new soldiers to take their place, and removing the Vandals who were left and especially all their women from the whole of Libya. He surrounded each city with a wall, enforced the laws with great strictness, and so restored the republic completely. [4] Libya became powerful under his rule as to its revenues and prosperous in other respects.

540 [5] When everything had been arranged by him in the best possible way, he again made an expedition against Iaudas and the Moors of the Aurès. [6] First he sent forward Gontharis, one of his own spearmen and an able warrior, with an army. [7] Gontharis came to the Abigas river and made camp near Bagaïs, a deserted city. [8] He there engaged with the enemy but was defeated in battle and, retiring to his stockade, was being hard-pressed in the siege by the Moors. [9] But afterward Solomon himself arrived with the whole army and, when he was sixty stades away from the camp that Gontharis was commanding, he made a stockade and remained there. Hearing all that had happened to the force of Gontharis, he sent them a part of his army and urged them to keep up the fight against the enemy with courage. [10] But the Moors, having gained the upper hand in the engagement, as I said, did as follows. [11] The Abigas river flows from the Aurès and, descending into a plain, irrigates the land just as the men there desire. [12] For the natives conduct this stream to whatever place they think it will best serve them at the moment, for in this plain there are many channels into which the Abigas is divided and, entering all of them, it passes underground and reappears again above the ground and reunites its stream. [13] This takes place over the greatest part of the plain and makes it possible for the inhabitants there, by blocking the waterways with earth, or by again opening them, to make use of the waters of this river as they see fit. [14] So at that time the Moors closed up all the channels there and allowed the whole stream to flow about the camp of the Romans. [15] As a result of this, a deep, muddy marsh formed there through which it was impossible to go; this stunned them and they were at an utter loss. [16] When Solomon heard this, he came quickly. But the barbarians, becoming afraid, withdrew to the foot of the Aurès. They made camp in a place they call Babosis and remained there.[417] So Solomon moved with his whole army and went there. [17] Upon engaging with the enemy, he defeated them decisively and put them to flight. [18] After this the Moors did not think it advisable for them to fight a pitched battle with the Romans, for they did not hope to overcome them in this kind of fight, but they did have hope, based on the harsh terrain of the Aurès, that the Romans would quickly give up because of the annoyances they would have to suffer, and would withdraw from there just as they had done formerly. [19] Most of them, therefore, went off to Mauretania and to the barbarians to the south of the Aurès, but Iaudas with twenty thousand Moors remained there. It happened that he had built a fortress on the Aurès, Zerboule by name.

417. Its exact location is unknown.

Into this he entered with all the Moors and remained quiet. [20] But Solomon was by no means willing to waste time in a siege, so, learning that the plains about the city of Timgad were full of grain just becoming ripe, he led his army there and settled down to plunder the land. After burning everything, he returned again to the fortress of Zerboule.

[21] But during this time, while the Romans were plundering the land, Iaudas, leaving behind some of the Moors, about as many as he thought would be sufficient for the defense of the fortress, himself ascended to the summit of the Aurès with the rest of the army, not wishing to stand siege in the fort and run out of provisions. [22] Finding a high place with cliffs on all sides of it and concealed by sheer rocks, Toumar by name, he remained quietly there. [23] The Romans besieged the fortress of Zerboule for three days. They used bows, as the wall was not high, and hit many of the barbarians upon the parapets. [24] By some chance it happened that all the leaders of the Moors were hit by these missiles and died. [25] When three days had passed and night came on, the Romans, knowing nothing of the death of the Moorish leaders, were planning to break up the siege. [26] For it seemed better to Solomon to go against Iaudas and the multitude of the Moors, thinking that, if he were able to capture them by a siege, the barbarians in Zerboule would yield to the Romans with less trouble and difficulty. [27] But the barbarians, thinking that they could no longer hold out against the siege, given that all their leaders were now destroyed, decided to flee with all speed and abandon the fortress. [28] They fled immediately, in silence, and without allowing the enemy in any way to perceive it. The Romans at daybreak began to prepare for their departure. [29] As no one appeared on the wall, although the besieging army was withdrawing, they were amazed and began to wonder among themselves. [30] In this state of uncertainty they went around the fortress and found the small gate open, from which the Moors had departed in flight. [31] Entering the fortress they treated everything as plunder but had no thought of pursuing the enemy, who had set out lightly equipped and knew the country all around. [32] When they had plundered everything, they set guards over the fortress, and all advanced on foot.

20. Coming to the place Toumar, where the enemy had shut themselves in and were remaining quiet, they encamped nearby in a bad position, where there would be no water supply, except a little, nor any other necessity. [2] After much time was spent and the barbarians did not come out against them at all, they themselves, no less than the enemy, if not even more, were hard-pressed by the siege and began to be impatient. [3] More than anything else, they were distressed by the lack of water. Solomon guarded it himself, giving out each day no more than a single cupful to each man. [4] As he saw that they were openly discontent and no longer able to bear their present hardships, he planned to make trial of the place, although it was difficult of access, and called them all together and exhorted them as follows:

Solomon to the Roman army

> [5] As God has granted that the Romans lay siege to the Moors in the Aurès, a thing that previously was beyond hope and now would be altogether incredible to any who could not see what is actually happening, it is necessary that we too should lend our aid to the help that has come from Above, and not betray

this favor; rather, undergoing the danger with enthusiasm, we should reach for the good fortune that will come from success. [6] For every turning of the scales for human affairs depends on the precise moment of opportunity; but if a man, by willful cowardice, betrays his fortune, he cannot then justly blame it, having by his own action brought the guilt upon himself. [7] You surely see the weakness of the Moors and the place in which they have shut themselves up and are keeping guard, deprived of all the necessities of life. [8] As for you, you must choose between one of two things, either to await the enemy's surrender but without feeling any annoyance at the siege, or, if you shrink from this, to reach for a victory that comes with danger. [9] But fighting against these barbarians will be the more free from danger for us, inasmuch as they are already fighting with hunger and, I think, they will never even come to blows with us. Having these things in mind at the present time, it is proper that you execute all your orders with eagerness.

[10] After Solomon had made this exhortation, he looked to see from what point it would be best for his men to make an attempt on the place, and for a long time he seemed to be in perplexity. For the difficult terrain seemed to him too much to contend with. [11] But while Solomon was considering this, chance provided a way forward, as follows. [12] There was a certain Gezon in the army, a foot soldier and the *optio* of the detachment to which he belonged; for thus the Romans call the paymaster. [13] This Gezon, either in play or anger, or even moved by some divine impulse, began to make the ascent alone, apparently going against the enemy, and he was followed close behind by some of his fellow soldiers, who were marveling greatly at what he was doing. [14] Three of the Moors, who had been stationed to guard the approach, suspecting that the man was coming against them, went on the run to confront him. [15] But they were in a narrow spot and so did not proceed in formation; rather, each one went separately. [16] Gezon struck the first one who came at him and killed him, and likewise he dispatched each of the others. [17] When those in the rear perceived this, they advanced with much shouting and ruckus against the enemy. [18] The whole Roman army heard and saw what was happening and, without waiting either for the general to lead the way for them or for the trumpets to sound the attack, as was customary, nor even keeping their order, but making a great uproar and urging one another on, they ran to the enemy's camp. [19] There Rouphinos and Leontios, the sons of Zaunas, the son of Pharesmanes, made a splendid display of valorous deeds against the enemy. [20] The Moors were awestruck by this and, when they learned that their guards also had been slain, they immediately turned to flight where each one could, and most of them were overtaken in the difficult ground and killed. [21] Iaudas himself, although struck by a javelin in the thigh, nevertheless escaped and withdrew to Mauretania. [22] But the Romans, after plundering the enemy's camp, decided not to abandon the Aurès again, but to guard fortresses which Solomon was to build there, so that this mountain might not be again accessible to the Moors.[418]

418. For more detail on the forts built by Justinian (i.e., Solomon) in the Aurès, see *Buildings* 6.7.7–8.

[23] There is in the Aurès a steep rock that rises in the midst of cliffs; the natives call it the Rock of Geminianus. There the men of old had built a tower, making it small as a place of refuge, strong and unassailable, as the nature of the position facilitated it. [24] Here, as it happened, Iaudas had a few days previously deposited his money and women, setting an old Moor in charge as guardian of the money. [25] He could never have suspected that the enemy would either reach this place, or that they could in all of eternity ever capture the tower by force. [26] But the Romans at that time, surveying the rough country of the Aurès, came there and one of them, with a laugh, attempted to climb up to the tower. But the women began to taunt him, ridiculing him for attempting the impossible. [27] The old man, peering out from the tower, did the same. But when the Roman soldier, climbing with both hands and feet, had come near them, he drew his sword quietly, leaped forward as quickly as he could, and struck the old man a solid blow to the neck, managing to cut through it. [28] The head fell down to the ground, and the soldiers, now emboldened and following one another, ascended to the tower, and took out from there both the women and the money, of which there was a great quantity. [29] By means of it Solomon built walls for many of the cities in Libya.

[30] After the Moors departed from Numidia, defeated as stated, the land of Zabe, which is beyond the Aurès mountains and is called First Mauretania, whose metropolis is Sitifis, was added to the Roman empire by Solomon as a tributary province.[419] [31] For Caesarea is the first city of the other Mauretania, where Mastigas was settled with his Moors, having the whole land there subject and tributary to him, except, of course, the city of Caesarea. [32] For this city Belisarios had previously recovered for the Romans, as was explained above.[420] The Romans always journey to this city in ships, but they are not able to go by land, as Moors dwell in that country. [33] As a result of *539–*
this all the Libyans who were subjects of the Romans, coming to enjoy secure peace and *544*
finding the rule of Solomon wise and very moderate, no longer had any thought of war in their minds and seemed the most fortunate of all men.

21. But in the fourth year after this it came about that all their blessings were turned to
the opposite. For in the seventeenth year of the reign of the emperor Justinian, Kyros and *543–*
Sergios, the sons of Bakchos, Solomon's brother, were assigned by the emperor to rule the *544*
cities in Libya: Kyros, the elder, to have Pentapolis, and Sergios Tripolis. [2] The Moors who are called Leuathai came to Sergios with a great army at the city of Leptis Magna, spreading the report that they had come so that Sergios might give them the customary gifts and insignia of office and so make the peace secure.[421] [3] But Sergios, persuaded by Pudentius, a man of Tripolis, whom I mentioned in an earlier book as having served the emperor Justinian against the Vandals at the beginning of the Vandal War,[422] received

419. Cf. *Buildings* 6.7.9–10.

420. 4.5.5.

421. For the insignia, see 3.25.4–8.

422. 3.10.22.

eighty of the most notable men among the barbarians into the city, promising to fulfill all their demands, but he commanded the rest to remain in the suburb. [4] After giving to these eighty men pledges concerning the peace, he invited them to a banquet. They say that these barbarians had come to the city with treacherous intentions, to lay a trap for Sergios and kill him.[423] [5] When they began a discussion with him, they brought many charges against the Romans, and in particular said that their crops had been plundered wrongfully. [6] Sergios, paying no attention to these things, rose from the seat on which he was sitting and wanted to leave. [7] One of the barbarians present, laying hold of his shoulder, attempted to prevent him from going. [8] Then the others began to shout in confusion, and were already rushing together about him. [9] But one of the spearmen of Sergios, drawing his sword, killed that Moor. [10] As a result a great commotion arose in the room, as was natural, and the spearmen of Sergios killed all the barbarians. [11] But one of them, seeing the others being slain, jumped out of the house where these things were taking place, unnoticed by anyone, and coming to his people revealed what had happened to their fellows. [12] When they heard this, they went on the run to their own camp and, together with all the others, came in arms against the Romans. [13] When they came near the city of Leptis Magna, Sergios and Pudentius confronted them with their whole army. [14] The battle came to hand-to-hand combat: at first the Romans were winning and slew many of the enemy, plundered their camp, secured their goods, and enslaved an great number of women and children. [15] But then Pudentius, driven by reckless daring, was killed, and Sergios with the Roman army, as it was already growing dark, marched into Leptis Magna.

544 [16] The barbarians later took the field against the Romans, having made more extensive preparations. Sergios went to join his uncle Solomon, in order that he too might go against the enemy with a larger army; and he found there his brother Kyros also. [17] The barbarians, coming to Byzacium, made raids and plundered a great part of that country. Antalas, whom I mentioned earlier as having remained faithful to the Romans and being, for this reason, sole ruler of the Moors in Byzacium,[424] had by now become hostile to Solomon, because Solomon had deprived him of the maintenance with which the emperor had honored him and had killed his brother, charging him with an uprising against the people of Byzacium.[425] [18] So at that time Antalas was pleased to see these barbarians and, making an alliance with them, led them against Solomon and Carthage. [19] When Solomon heard this, he moved out with his whole army and marched against them. Coming upon them at the city of Tebesta, distant six days' journey from Carthage, he established his camp with the sons of his brother Bakchos, namely Kyros, Sergios, and Solomon the younger. [20] Fearing the multitude of the barbarians, he sent to the leaders of the Leuathai, reproaching them because,

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423. This is contradicted in *Secret History* 5.28, which makes Sergios out to be the murderer.

424. 4.12.30.

425. Corippus, *Iohannis* 2.34–35, says that Antalas had remained loyal to Rome for ten years, i.e., 533–543, and names his slain brother as Guarizila at 4.364–66 (for him, see also 2.28, 3.384).

while at peace with the Romans, they had taken up arms and come against them; he demanded that they confirm the peace existing between them and promised to swear the most dread oaths that he would forget what they had done. [21] But the barbarians mocked his words and said that he would of course swear by the sacred writings of the Christians, which they conventionally call Gospels. [22] Now as Sergios had once taken these oaths and then had slain those who trusted in them,[426] they wanted to go into battle and test these sacred writings, to see what sort of power they had against perjurers, in order that they might first have absolute confidence in them before entering into an agreement. When Solomon heard this, he made preparations for battle.

[23] On the following day he engaged with part of the enemy as they were bringing in large amounts of booty, conquered them in battle, seized all their booty, and kept it under guard. [24] When the soldiers were dissatisfied and protested that he did not give them the plunder, he said that he was awaiting the outcome of the war, in order that they might distribute everything then, according to the share that seemed to suit the merit of each. [25] But when the barbarians advanced a second time to give battle with their whole army, some of the Romans stayed behind and the others entered the ranks with no enthusiasm. [26] At first, then, the battle was evenly contested, but later, as the Moors were vastly superior in number, most of the Romans fled. Solomon and a few men about him held out for a time against the missiles of the barbarians, but then they were overpowered by the enemy and, fleeing in haste, reached a ravine made by a brook that flowed in that region. [27] There Solomon's horse stumbled and he fell to the ground; his spearmen lifted him quickly in their arms and set him upon his horse. [28] But overcome by great pain and unable to hold the reins any longer, he was overtaken and killed by the barbarians, along with many of his spearmen. Such was the end of Solomon's life.[427]

22. After the death of Solomon, Sergios, who, as was said,[428] was his nephew, took over the government of Libya by gift of the emperor. [2] This man became the chief cause of great ruin to the people of Libya, and all were dissatisfied with his rule: the officers because he was extremely stupid, immature both in character and in years, and the greatest braggart of all men, insulting them for no reason and overlooking them, always using the power of his wealth and the authority of his office to this end; the soldiers disliked him because he was altogether unmanly and weak; and the Libyans for the same reasons, but also because he had an irrational lust for the wives and possessions of others. [3] Most of all Ioannes, the son of Sisiniolos, was hostile to the power of Sergios, for, although he was an able warrior and had a superb reputation, he found Sergios to be

426. According to the *Secret History* 5.28.

427. For the battle, see also Corippus, *Iohannis* 3.417–41, who attributes the defeat to the treacherous withdrawal of Gontharis, the future rebel. Victor of Tonnena, *Chronicle* s.a. 543 says that the battle took place at Cillium.

428. 4.21.1.

absolutely ungrateful. [4] For this reason neither he nor anyone else at all was willing to take up arms against the enemy. [5] Almost all the Moors were following Antalas, and Stotzas came at his summons from Mauretania. [6] As not one of the enemy came out against them, they began to ravage the country, making plunder of everything without fear. At that time Antalas sent a letter to the emperor Justinian, [7] which set forth the following:

Antalas to Justinian

> That I am a slave of your empire not even I myself would deny, but the Moors, having suffered unholy treatment at the hands of Solomon in a time of peace, have been forced to take up arms, not raising them against you, but to fight off the enemy, and this is especially true of me. [8] For he not only decided to deprive me of the maintenance that Belisarios long before decreed and that you too granted, but he also killed my own brother, although he had no crime to charge him with. [9] We have therefore taken vengeance upon him who wronged us. If it is your will that the Moors be subject to your empire and serve it in all things as they are accustomed to do, command Sergios, the nephew of Solomon, to depart from here and return to you, and send another general to Libya. [10] For you do not lack in men of discretion, more worthy than Sergios in every way, but for as long as this man commands your army, peace cannot be established between the Romans and the Moors.

Such was the letter written by Antalas. [11] But the emperor, even after reading it and learning the common hostility of all toward Sergios, was still unwilling to remove him from his office out of respect for the virtues of Solomon and especially the manner of his death. Such, then, was the course of these events.

[12] Solomon, the brother of Sergios, who was believed to have disappeared from the world together with his uncle Solomon, was forgotten by his brother and by the rest too, for no one knew that he was alive. [13] But the Moors, as it happened, had captured him alive, as he was very young, and they asked him who he was. [14] He said that he was a Vandal by birth and a slave of Solomon. He said, moreover, that he had a friend, a physician, Pegasius by name, in the city of Laribus nearby, who would purchase him by giving ransom. [15] So the Moors came up close to the fortifications of the city, called Pegasius, displayed Solomon to him, and asked whether it was his pleasure to purchase the man. [16] He agreed to purchase him, and they sold Solomon to him for fifty pieces of gold. [17] But when he got inside the circuit-walls, Solomon taunted the Moors for having been deceived by him, a mere lad. He said that he was no other than Solomon, the son of Bakchos and nephew of Solomon. [18] The Moors, deeply stung by what had happened and counting it a terrible thing that, while having a strong security against Sergios and the Romans, they had relinquished it so carelessly, came to Laribus and laid siege to the place, in order to capture Solomon with the city. [19] The besieged, in terror at being invested by the barbarians, for they had not even carried in provisions, opened negotiations with the Moors, proposing that upon receiving a great sum of money they immediately abandon the siege. [20] The barbarians, thinking that they could never take the city by force—for Moors are not practiced in

storming walls—and, also, not knowing that provisions were scarce for the besieged, were receptive to their proposal. When they had received three thousand pieces of gold, they broke up the siege, and all the Leuathai went home.[429]

23. But Antalas and the army of the Moors were gathering again in Byzacium and Stotzas was with them, having a few soldiers and Vandals. [2] Ioannes, the son of Sisiniolos, being earnestly entreated by the Libyans, gathered an army and marched against them. [3] Now it happened that Himerios the Thracian was commander of the units in Byzacium and at that time he was ordered by Ioannes to bring with him all the units there together with their commanders, and come to a place called Menephesse, which is in Byzacium, and join him there. [4] But later, hearing that the enemy were encamped there, Ioannes wrote to Himerios telling what had happened and directing him to unite with his forces at another place, that they might not go separately, but all together, to encounter the enemy. [5] But by some chance those who had this letter went by another road and were unable to find Himerios, so he and with his army, coming upon the camp of the enemy, fell into their hands. [6] Now there was in this Roman army a youth, Severianos, the son of Asiatikos, a Phoenician and native of Emesa, commanding a cavalry unit. [7] This man alone, together with the soldiers under him, fifty in number, engaged with the enemy. [8] For some time they held out, but later, overpowered by the great multitude, they ran to the top of a hill in the area where there was a fort, but not a secure one. [9] Thus they surrendered to their opponents when they ascended the hill to attack them. [10] The Moors killed neither him nor any of the soldiers, but they made prisoners of the whole force. Himerios they kept under guard and handed his soldiers over to Stotzas, as they agreed with great willingness to march with the rebels against the Romans. Himerios, however, they threatened with death if he did not carry out their commands. [11] They commanded him to put into their hands by some device the city of Hadrumetum by the sea. He declared that he was willing, so they went with him against Hadrumetum. [12] When they came near the city, they sent Himerios a little in advance with some of Stotzas' soldiers, dragging along, ostensibly, some Moors in chains, and they themselves followed behind. [13] They commanded Himerios to say to those in command of the city gates that the emperor's army had won a decisive victory, and that Ioannes would come soon, bringing an even larger number of Moorish captives. When in this manner the gates had been opened to them, he was to get inside the fortifications together with his escort. [14] He carried out these orders. The people of Hadrumetum, deceived in this way (for they had no reason to distrust the commander of all the soldiers in Byzacium), opened wide the gates and received the enemy. [15] Then those who had entered with Himerios drew their swords and would not allow the guards there to shut the gates again, but immediately received the whole army of the Moors into the city. [16] The barbarians plundered it and established there a few guards, and then departed.

429. Solomon murdered Pegasius on the way to Carthage, a crime for which he was cleared by the emperor, but he died before he could reach his home in the east (*Secret History* 5.34–38).

[17] A few of the Romans who had been captured escaped and came to Carthage, among whom were Severianos and Himerios. For it was not difficult to escape from Moors, if one wished it. But many remained with Stotzas, not at all unwillingly.

[18] Not long after this one of the priests, Paulus by name, who was in charge of caring for the sick, conferred with some of the nobles and said: "I myself will journey to Carthage and am hopeful that I will return quickly with an army. It will be up to you to receive the emperor's forces into the city." [19] So they tied some ropes to him and let him down by night from the walls. Coming to the seashore and happening upon a fishing vessel, he won over its owners with great sums of money and sailed off to Carthage. [20] When he landed there and came into Sergios' presence, he told the whole story and asked to receive a considerable army in order to recover Hadrumetum. [21] This by no means pleased Sergios, given that the army in Carthage was not great, so the priest begged to be given only a few soldiers. Receiving not more than eighty men, he formed the following plan. [22] He collected a large number of boats and skiffs and embarked on them many sailors and other Libyans, clad in the garments that Roman soldiers are accustomed to wear. [23] Setting off with the whole fleet, he sailed at full speed straight for Hadrumetum. When he had come close to it, he sent some men stealthily and declared to the notables of the city that Germanos, the emperor's nephew, had recently come to Carthage, and had sent a considerable army to the people of Hadrumetum. [24] He urged them to take courage at this and open for them one small gate that night. [25] They carried out his orders. Thus Paulus got inside the fortifications with his followers, and he slew all the enemy and recovered Hadrumetum for the emperor, but the rumor about Germanos, starting there, reached even Carthage. [26] The Moors, as well as Stotzas and his followers, at first became terrified when they heard this and went off in flight to the ends of Libya, but later, upon learning the truth, they believed it was a terrible thing that they, after sparing all the people of Hadrumetum, had suffered such things at their hands. [27] For this reason they made raids everywhere and inflicted unholy harm upon the Libyans, sparing no one because of his age, and the land became at that time for the most part depopulated. [28] For of the Libyans who had been left some fled into the cities and some to Sicily and the other islands. [29] Almost all the notables came to Byzantion, among them Paulus also, who had recovered Hadrumetum for the emperor. [30] As no one came out against them, the Moors were plundering everything with still less fear, and with them was Stotzas, who was now powerful. [31] For many Roman soldiers were following him, some who had come as deserters and others who had started off as captives but now remained with him of their own free will. [32] Ioannes, who was a man of some reputation among the Moors, was remaining quiet because of his clash with Sergios.[430]

545 **24.** At this time the emperor sent another general, Areobindos, to Libya with a few soldiers; he was a man of the senate and of good birth, but utterly inexperienced in matters of war. [2] He sent with him Athanasios, a prefect, who had recently arrived

430. See also *Secret History* 5.31.

from Italy, and a few Armenians led by Artabanes and Ioannes, the sons of Ioannes, of the line of the Arsakids, who had recently left the Persian army and as deserters had come to the Romans, together with the other Armenians. [3] With Areobindos were his sister and his wife, Preïekta, the daughter of Vigilantia, the sister of the emperor Justinian. [4] The emperor did not recall Sergios, however, but commanded that both he and Areobindos be generals of Libya, dividing the country and the units of soldiers between them. [5] He enjoined upon Sergios to carry on the war against the barbarians in Numidia, and upon Areobindos to fight constantly against the Moors in Byzacium. [6] When this expedition landed at Carthage, Sergios departed for Numidia with his own army, while Areobindos, learning that Antalas and Stotzas were encamped near the city of Sicca Veneria, three days' journey distant from Carthage, commanded Ioannes, the son of Sisiniolos, to go against them, choosing out the best part of the army. [7] And he wrote to Sergios to unite with the forces of Ioannes, in order that they might all with one common force engage with the enemy. [8] But Sergios decided to disregard the message and have nothing to do with this affair, and so Ioannes with a small army was forced to engage with an innumerable army of the enemy. [9] There had always been great enmity between him and Stotzas, and each one used to pray that he might slay the other before departing from the world. [10] At that time, then, as soon as the fighting was about to come to close quarters, both rode out from their armies and came against each other. [11] Ioannes drew his bow and, as Stotzas was advancing, made a successful shot and hit him in the right groin. Stotzas, mortally wounded, fell there, not yet dead but destined to survive this wound only a little time. [12] And all came up immediately, both the Moorish army and those who followed Stotzas, and, placing Stotzas with little life in him against a tree, they advanced upon their enemy with great fury. As they were far superior in number, they routed Ioannes and all the Romans with no difficulty. [13] They say that Ioannes remarked then that death had now a certain sweetness for him, as his prayer regarding Stotzas had been fulfilled. There was a steep place nearby, where his horse stumbled and threw him off. [14] As he was trying to leap back upon it, the enemy caught and killed him, a man who had become great both in reputation and virtue. Stotzas learned this and then died, remarking only that now it was most sweet to die. [15] In this battle Ioannes, the Armenian and brother of Artabanes, also died, after performing valorous deeds against the enemy. [16] The emperor, upon hearing this, was deeply grieved because of the virtue of Ioannes and, thinking it inexpedient for the two generals to administer the province, he immediately recalled Sergios and sent him to Italy with an army, and gave over the whole power of Libya to Areobindos.

25. Two months after Sergios had departed from there, Gontharis set up a tyranny in the following manner. He himself happened to be commanding the units in Numidia and spending his time there for that reason, but he was secretly treating with the Moors to march against Carthage. [2] Immediately, therefore, an army of the enemy, having assembled at one place from Numidia and Byzacium, went with great eagerness against Carthage. The Numidians were commanded by Koutzinas and Iaudas, and the men of

Byzacium by Antalas. [3] With him was also Ioannes, the rebel, and his followers; for the rebels, after Stotzas' death, had set him up as their ruler.[431] [4] When Areobindos learned of their attack, he summoned to Carthage a number of the officers with their men, and among them Gontharis. He was joined also by Artabanes and the Armenians. [5] Areobindos, accordingly, instructed Gontharis to lead the whole army against the enemy. [6] And Gontharis, although he had promised to serve him zealously in the war, proceeded to act as follows. He ordered one of his servants, a Moor by birth and a cook by trade, to go to the enemy army and make it appear to all others that he had run away from his master, but to tell Antalas secretly that Gontharis wished to share with him the rule of Libya. [7] So the cook carried out these directions and Antalas heard his report gladly, but made no reply other than to say that worthy enterprises are not properly carried out by cooks. [8] When Gontharis heard this, he immediately sent to Antalas one of his spearmen, Ulitheus by name, whom he had found especially trustworthy in his service, inviting him to come as close as possible to Carthage. [9] For, if this were done, he promised to put Areobindos out of the way. [10] So Ulitheus, without the rest of the barbarians knowing it, made an agreement with Antalas that Antalas would rule Byzacium, having half the possessions of Areobindos and taking with him fifteen hundred Roman soldiers, while Gontharis would assume the dignity of emperor and hold power over Carthage and the rest of Libya. [11] After settling these matters he returned to the Roman camp, which they had made entirely before the circuit-wall, distributing among themselves the guarding of each gate. [12] The barbarians not long after made straight for Carthage in great haste, and they encamped and remained in the place called Decimum. Departing from there the following day, they were moving forward. [13] But some of the Roman army encountered them and, engaging with them unexpectedly, slew many of the Moors. [14] But these were immediately called back by Gontharis, who rebuked them for acting with reckless daring and for wanting to throw Roman affairs into certain danger.

[15] In the meantime, Areobindos sent to Koutzinas secretly and negotiated over him turning traitor. Koutzinas promised him that, as soon as they began the battle, he would turn against Antalas and the Moors of Byzacium. [16] For the Moors keep faith neither with any other men nor with each other. Areobindos reported this to Gontharis. [17] He, wishing to frustrate the enterprise by having it postponed, advised Areobindos to have no faith in Koutzinas, unless he received from him his children as hostages. [18] So Areobindos and Koutzinas, constantly sending secret messages to each other, were busying themselves with the plot against Antalas. [19] Gontharis sent Ulitheus once more and revealed what was happening to Antalas. [20] He decided not to make any charge against Koutzinas and did not reveal to him that he had discovered the plot, nor, however, did he disclose anything to which he and Gontharis had agreed. [21] Though enemies and hostile at heart to one another, then, they were arrayed on the same side with treacherous intent, each marching with the other against his own friend. [22] With such purposes

431. According to other sources, this Ioannes was given the nickname "Stotzas Junior."

Koutzinas and Antalas were leading the Moorish army against Carthage. Gontharis was planning to kill Areobindos, but, to avoid the appearance of aiming at a rebellion, he wished to do this secretly in battle, in order to make it seem that the plot had been made by others against the general, and that he had been compelled by the Roman army to take on the governorship over Libya. [23] Accordingly, he circumvented Areobindos by deceit and persuaded him to go out against the enemy and engage with them, now that they had come close to Carthage. [24] He decided, therefore, that on the following day he would lead the whole army against the enemy at sunrise. [25] But Areobindos, being very inexperienced in this matter and reluctant besides, kept holding back for no good reason. [26] While considering how to put on his equipment of arms and armor and making the other preparations for the sally, he wasted the greatest part of the day. [27] Thus he put off the engagement to the next day and remained quiet. [28] But Gontharis, suspecting that he had hesitated deliberately, being aware of what was taking place, decided to accomplish the murder of the general openly and make his attempt at the tyranny.

26. On the next day he acted as follows. Opening wide the gates where he himself kept guard, he placed huge rocks under them so that no one would be able easily to shut them, stationed many armored men with bows in their hands on the parapets, and he himself, having put on his breastplate, took his stand between the gates. [2] His purpose in doing this was not to receive the Moors into the city; for the Moors, being altogether fickle, are suspicious of all men. [3] It is not unreasonable that they are so, for whoever is by nature treacherous toward his neighbors is himself unable to trust anyone at all and is compelled to be suspicious of all men, as he measures the character of his neighbor by his own mind. [4] For this reason, then, Gontharis did not hope that even the Moors would trust him enough to come inside the circuit-wall, but he made this move in order that Areobindos, falling into great fear, might immediately rush off in flight and, abandoning Carthage as quickly as he could, take himself back to Byzantion. [5] And he would have been right in this expectation had not a storm come on just then and frustrated his plans. [6] Areobindos, learning what was happening, summoned Athanasios and some of the notables. [7] Artabanes also came to him from the camp with two others and urged Areobindos neither to lose heart nor to give way to the audacity of Gontharis, but to go against him instantly with all his men and engage him in battle, before he caused any further harm. [8] At first, then, Areobindos sent to Gontharis one of his friends, Freda by name, and commanded him to ascertain the other man's intentions. [9] When Freda returned and reported that Gontharis did not deny his intention to seize supreme power, he intended immediately to go against him prepared for battle.

[10] But in the meantime Gontharis slandered Areobindos to the soldiers, saying that he was a coward and not only possessed with fear of the enemy, but at the same time quite unwilling to give them their pay; also that he was planning to run away with Athanasios and that they were about to sail very soon from Mandracium,[432] in order

432. A port of Carthage (3.20.3).

that the soldiers, fighting both with hunger and the Moors, be destroyed; and he asked them whether they wanted to arrest both and keep them under guard. [11] For thus he hoped either that Areobindos, perceiving the commotion, would turn to flight, or that he would be captured by the soldiers and ruthlessly put to death. [12] Moreover, he promised that he himself would advance to the soldiers money of his own, as much as the government owed them. [13] They approved his words and were enraged at Areobindos, but while this was going on Areobindos arrived together with Artabanes and his followers. [14] A battle took place on the parapet and below about the gate where Gontharis had taken his stand, and neither side was worsted. [15] All were about to gather from the camps who were loyal to the emperor and overwhelm the rebels. For Gontharis had not yet deceived everyone, and the majority remained uncorrupted in their loyalty. [16] But Areobindos, seeing then for the first time the killing of men—for he had not yet, as it happened, been acquainted with this sight—was terror-stricken and, turning coward, fled, unable to endure what he saw. [17] There is a temple inside the walls of Carthage by the seashore, where live men who are exact in their practice of religion, whom we have always been accustomed to call "monks." This temple had been built by Solomon not long before, and he had surrounded it with a wall and made it a strong fortress.[433] [18] Areobindos, fleeing for refuge, rushed into the monastery, where he had already sent his wife and sister. [19] Then Artabanes also ran away, and all the rest withdrew from Carthage as each one could. [20] Gontharis, having taken the city by assault, took possession of the palace with the rebels and was already guarding both the gates and the harbor most carefully. [21] First, then, he summoned Athanasios, who came to him without delay. [22] By using much flattery, Athanasios made it appear that what had been done pleased him extremely. [23] After this Gontharis sent the priest of the city and commanded Areobindos, after receiving pledges, to come to the palace, threatening that he would besiege him if he disobeyed and would not again give him pledges of safety, but would use every means to capture him and put him to death. [24] So the priest, Reparatus, asserted to Areobindos that, in accordance with the decision of Gontharis, he would swear that no harm would come to him from him, telling him also what he had threatened in case he did not obey. [25] Areobindos was terrified and agreed to follow the priest immediately, if the latter were to perform the sacred bath[434] in the usual manner and then swear to him by that rite and give pledges for his safety. [26] The priest did this. Areobindos without delay followed him, clad in a garment that was suitable neither for a general nor anyone else in military service but appropriate rather to a slave or private citizen; this garment the Romans call *casula* in the Latin tongue. [27] When they came near the palace, he took in his hands the holy scriptures from the priest and went before Gontharis. [28] Falling prone he lay there a long time, holding out to him the suppliant olive branch and the holy scriptures, and with him

433. This monastery is mentioned also at *Buildings* 6.5.11. Victor of Tonnena was imprisoned there later (*Chronicle* s.a. 555).

434. I.e., baptism.

was the child that had been granted the sacred bath on which the priest had given him the pledge, as I said. [29] When, with difficulty, Gontharis had raised him to his feet, he asked Gontharis in the name of all things holy whether his safety was secure. [30] He then urged him to feel the most robust confidence, for he would suffer no harm at his hands, but on the following day would be gone from Carthage with his wife and his possessions. [31] Then he dismissed the priest Reparatus and invited Areobindos and Athanasios to dine with him in the palace. [32] At dinner he honored Areobindos, inviting him to take his place first on the couch; but after the dinner he did not let him go, but compelled him to sleep in a chamber alone, and he sent Ulitheus with certain others to attack him. [33] While he was wailing and crying aloud again and again and speaking entreating words to them to move them to pity, they slew him. Athanasios, however, they spared, passing him by, I suppose, on account of his advanced age.

27. On the following day Gontharis sent the head of Areobindos to Antalas, but decided to deprive him of the money and soldiers. [2] Antalas, therefore, was outraged, because Gontharis was not carrying out any part of their agreement, and at the same time, upon considering what Gontharis had sworn and then done to Areobindos, he was incensed. [3] For it did not seem to him that one who had disregarded such oaths would ever be faithful either to him or anyone else. [4] After considering the matter long with himself, he wanted to submit to the emperor Justinian, so he marched back. [5] Learning that Markentios, who commanded the units in Byzacium, had fled to one of the islands that lie off the coast, he sent to him and, telling him the whole story and giving him pledges, he brought the man over to his side. [6] Markentios remained with Antalas in the camp, while the soldiers who were stationed in Byzacium, being loyal to the emperor, guarded the city of Hadrumetum. [7] But the soldiers of Stotzas, being not less than a thousand, perceived what was being done and went in great haste, with Ioannes leading them, to Gontharis. [8] He gladly received them into the city. They were five hundred Romans and about eighty Huns, while the rest were all Vandals. [9] Artabanes, upon receiving pledges, went up to the palace with his Armenians and promised to obey the rebel's orders. [10] But secretly he intended to destroy Gontharis, having communicated this plan to Gregorios, his nephew, and Artasires, his spearman. [11] Gregorios, urging him on to the undertaking, spoke as follows:

Gregorios to Artabanes

> Artabanes, you and you alone now have the opportunity to win glory like Belisarios, or even to surpass that glory by far. [12] For he came here, having received a most formidable army and great sums of money from the emperor, with officers to accompany him and advisers in great numbers, a fleet of ships whose like we have never before heard of, much cavalry, arms, and everything else, in a word, was prepared for him in a manner worthy of the Roman empire. [13] Thus he won back Libya for the Romans with much effort. [14] But all these achievements have been so completely nullified that they are, at this moment, as if they had never happened, except that there is at present left to the Romans from the victory of Belisarios the losses they have suffered in lives and money,

> and, in addition, that they are no longer able even to guard the good things that they won. [15] To win back all these things for the emperor now depends on your courage, judgment, and right hand alone. [16] So remember that you are of the house of the Arsakids by ancient descent, and consider that it is proper for men of noble birth to play the part of brave men always and in all places. [17] Now many remarkable deeds have been performed by you on behalf of freedom. When you were still young, you slew Akakios, the ruler of the Armenians, and Sittas, the general of the Romans, and as a result of this you became close to king Chosroes and campaigned with him against the Romans.[435] [18] Now that you have reached this station in life it is your duty not to allow Roman power to lie subject to a drunken dog. Show now, good sir, that it was by your nobility and virtuous spirit that you performed those deeds then. I and Artasires here will assist you in everything you command, insofar as we have the power.

[19] So spoke Gregorios, and he excited the mind of Artabanes still more against the tyrant.

[20] Gontharis, bringing out the wife and the sister of Areobindos from the fortress, compelled them to reside at a certain house, showing them no insult by any word or deed whatsoever, nor did they have fewer provisions than they needed, nor were they forced to say or to do anything except that Preïekta was forced to write to her uncle that Gontharis was honoring them extremely and that he was altogether innocent of the murder of her husband, which evil deed had been done by Ulitheus against the wishes of Gontharis. [21] Gontharis was persuaded to do this by Pasiphilos, a man who had become a leader among the rebels in Byzacium and had assisted Gontharis greatly in his effort to establish the tyranny. [22] For Pasiphilos maintained that, if he did this, the emperor would marry the young woman to him and, as her relative, would give as dowry a large sum of money. [23] Gontharis commanded Artabanes to lead the army against Antalas and the Moors in Byzacium. [24] For Koutzinas, having quarreled with Antalas, had broken from him openly and allied himself with Gontharis, giving him his son and mother as hostages. [25] So the army, with Artabanes in command, proceeded immediately against Antalas. With Artabanes was Ioannes, the commander of the rebels of Stotzas, and Ulitheus, the spearman of Gontharis. There were also Moors following him, led by Koutzinas. [26] After passing by the city of Hadrumetum, they came upon their opponents somewhere near there and, making camp a little apart from the enemy, they bivouacked. [27] On the day after that Ioannes and Ulitheus remained there with a unit of soldiers, while Artabanes and Koutzinas led the army against their opponents. [28] The Moors under Antalas did not withstand their attack and rushed off in flight. [29] But Artabanes suddenly played the coward willfully by turning his standard about and marching off toward the rear. [30] For this reason Ulitheus planned to kill him when he came into the camp. [31] But Artabanes excused himself by saying that he feared that Markentios, coming to assist the enemy from the city of Hadrumetum,

435. 2.3.15, 2.3.25.

where he happened to be, would do his forces irreparable harm. [32] Gontharis, he said, ought to march against the enemy with the whole army. [33] At first he considered going to Hadrumetum with his followers and joining the emperor's forces. [34] But after long deliberation it seemed to him better to put Gontharis out of the world and thus free both the emperor and Libya from a difficult situation. [35] Returning to Carthage, he reported to the tyrant that he would need a larger army to meet the enemy. [36] Gontharis, after conferring with Pasiphilos, wanted to equip his whole army and, after placing a guard in Carthage, lead the army in person against the enemy. [37] Each day he was destroying many men toward whom he felt any suspicion, even if groundless. [38] He ordered Pasiphilos, whom he planned to put in charge of the garrison of Carthage, to kill all the Greeks[436] without any consideration.

28. After arranging everything else in what seemed to him the best way, Gontharis decided to entertain his friends at a banquet, and then make his departure on the following day. [2] He held the banquet in a room where there were prepared three couches, which had been there from ancient times. [3] He himself reclined, as was natural, upon the first couch, where were also Athanasios and Artabanes, and some of those known to Gontharis, and Petros, a Thracian by birth, who had previously been a spearman of Solomon. [4] On both the other couches were the first and noblest of the Vandals. [5] Ioannes, however, who commanded the rebels of Stotzas, was entertained by Pasiphilos in his own house, and each of the other leaders wherever it suited the friends of Gontharis to entertain them. [6] Artabanes, accordingly, when he was invited to this banquet, thinking that this occasion furnished him a suitable opportunity for the murder of the tyrant, was planning to carry out his plan. [7] He disclosed the matter to Gregorios and Artasires and three other spearmen, instructing the spearmen to get inside with their swords (for when officers are entertained at a banquet it is customary for their spearmen to stand behind them), and, after getting inside, to attack suddenly at whatever moment seemed to them most suitable; and Artasires was to strike first. [8] He directed Gregorios to pick out a large number of the most daring Armenians and bring them to the palace, carrying only their swords in their hands (for it is not lawful for the escort of officers in a city to be armed with anything else), and, leaving these men in the vestibule, to come inside with the spearmen; he was to tell the plan to none of them, but to tell them only this, that he was suspicious of Gontharis, fearing that he had called Artabanes to this banquet to do him harm. [9] He therefore wished them to stand beside the guards of Gontharis who had been stationed there and to give the impression of indulging in some play: they were to take hold of the shields carried by these guards and, waving them about and otherwise moving them, always turning them up and down. And if any ruckus or shouting came from within, they were to take up these very shields and come to the rescue on the run. [10] Such were the orders that Artabanes gave, and Gregorios proceeded to put them into execution. And Artasires

436. I.e., eastern Romans, the subjects of Justinian.

devised the following plan: he cut some arrows into two parts and placed them on the wrist of his left arm, the sections reaching to his elbow. After binding them carefully with straps, he laid over them the sleeve of his tunic. [11] He did this in order that, if anyone should raise his sword against him and attempt to strike him, he might avoid suffering serious injury, for he had only to thrust his left arm in front of him and the steel would break off as it crashed upon the wood and, thus, his body would not be touched at all. With such purpose, then, Artasires did as I said. [12] And to Artabanes he spoke as follows:

Artasires to Artabanes

> As for me, I have hopes that I will prove equal to the undertaking and will not hesitate, and also that I will slash the body of Gontharis with this sword. But as for what will follow, I am unable to say whether God in his anger against the tyrant will cooperate with me in this daring deed, or whether, punishing some sin of mine, will work against me there and block me. [13] If, therefore, you see that the tyrant is not wounded in a vital spot, kill me with my sword without the least hesitation, so that I may not be tortured by him into saying that it was your plan that I rush into the undertaking, and thus not only perish myself most shamefully but also be compelled against my will to destroy you too.

[14] After Artasires had said this he too, with Gregorios and one of the spearmen, entered and took his stand behind Artabanes by the couches. The rest, remaining by the guards, did as they had been commanded.

[15] So Artasires, when the banquet had only just begun, intended to set to work and was already holding the hilt of his sword. [16] But Gregorios prevented him by saying in Armenian that Gontharis was still himself, not having yet drunk any great quantity of wine. [17] Artasires groaned and said: "O man, I was all fired up and now you have wrongly hindered me!" [18] As the drinking went on, Gontharis, who by now was thoroughly wasted, began to give portions of the food to the spearmen, being in a generous mood. [19] Upon receiving these portions, they went outside the building and were about to eat them, leaving beside Gontharis only three spearmen, one of whom happened to be Ulitheus. [20] Artasires also started to go out to eat the portions with the rest. [21] But just then a kind of fear came over him that, when he wished to draw his sword, something might prevent him. [22] Accordingly, as soon as he got outside, he secretly threw away the sheath of the sword and, taking it naked under his arm, hidden by his cloak, he rushed in to Gontharis, as if to say something without the knowledge of the others. [23] Artabanes, seeing this, was in a fever of excitement and became deeply anxious by the surpassing magnitude of the enterprise. He began to shake his head, the color of his face changed repeatedly, and he seemed to have become like one supernaturally inspired on account of the greatness of the undertaking. [24] Petros saw this and understood what was being done, but he did not disclose it to anyone else because, being loyal to the emperor, he was extremely pleased by what was going on. [25] Artasires, having come close to the tyrant, was pushed by one of the servants and, as he backed off a little, the servant observed that his sword was bared and cried out saying: "What is this, good sir?" [26] Gontharis, putting his hand to his right

ear and turning his face, looked at him. [27] Artasires struck him with his sword as he did so, and cut off a piece of his scalp together with his fingers. [28] Petros cried out and exhorted Artasires to kill this most unholy of men. [29] Artabanes, seeing Gontharis leaping to his feet (for he was reclining close to him), drew a double-edged dagger that hung by his thigh—a rather large one—and thrust it into the tyrant's left side clean up to the hilt, leaving it there. [30] The tyrant still tried to leap up, but having received a mortal wound, fell where he was. [31] Ulitheus then brought his sword down upon Artasires as if to strike him over the head, but he held his left arm above his head and thus profited by his idea in the moment of greatest need. [32] For Ulitheus' sword had its edge turned by the sections of arrows on his arm, and so he himself was unscathed and killed Ulitheus with no difficulty. [33] Petros and Artabanes, the one seizing the sword of Gontharis and the other that of Ulitheus who had fallen, killed on the spot the spearmen who remained. [34] There arose, as was natural in all this, a great ruckus and confusion. When this was noticed by the Armenians who were standing by the tyrant's guards, they immediately picked up the shields according to the agreed-upon plan and went on the run to the banquet hall. They slew all the Vandals and friends of Gontharis, with no one resisting. [35] Then Artabanes pressed upon Athanasios the need to take charge of the money in the palace, for all that had been left by Areobindos was there. [36] When the guards learned of the death of Gontharis, many immediately arrayed themselves with the Armenians, for most of them were of Areobindos' household. With one accord, they acclaimed the emperor Justinian triumphant. [37] Coming from a multitude of men and being thereby an extremely mighty sound, the cry managed to reach most of the city. [38] Whereupon those who were loyal to the emperor rushed into the houses of the rebels and immediately killed them, finding some asleep, others while eating, and still others awestruck with fear and in terrible perplexity. [39] Pasiphilos was among them but not Ioannes, who fled to the sanctuary with some of the Vandals. [40] To them Artabanes gave pledges and, making them rise from there, sent them to Byzantion. So having thus restored the city to the emperor, he continued to guard it. [41] The murder of the tyrant took place on the thirty-sixth day of the tyranny, in the nineteenth year of the reign of the emperor Justinian. *545*

[42] Artabanes won great fame for himself from this deed among all men. [43] And immediately Preïekta, the wife of Areobindos, rewarded him with great sums of money and the emperor appointed him general of all Libya. [44] But not long after this Artabanes entreated the emperor to summon him to Byzantion, and the emperor fulfilled *546* his request. [45] Having summoned Artabanes, he appointed Ioannes, the brother of Pappos, sole general of Libya.[437] [46] This Ioannes, immediately upon arriving in Libya, had an engagement with Antalas and the Moors in Byzacium and, defeating them in *late 546 or early 547*

437. Also known as Ioannes Troglita, his military command of North Africa (546–551/552) was celebrated by Corippus in the epic *Iohannis*; the reader should consult that text for the details. Ioannes had participated in the original expedition under Belisarios and then served in the new province under Solomon. After a stint in the east (ca. 541–545), he was placed in command of the armies in North Africa.

battle, slew many. He recovered from the barbarians all the standards of Solomon, which they had secured as plunder when Solomon was taken from the world,[438] and sent them to the emperor. The rest of the Moors he drove as far as possible from the Roman terri-
547 tory. [47] But at a later time the Leuathai came again with a great army from the lands around Tripolis to Byzacium and united with the forces of Antalas. [48] When Ioannes went to meet this army, he was defeated in the battle and, losing many of his men, fled to Laribus.[439] [49] Then the enemy overran the whole country there as far as Carthage and treated in a terrible manner those Libyans who fell in their way. [50] But not long
548 afterward Ioannes rallied the soldiers who had survived and, drawing into alliance with him many Moors including those under Koutzinas, came to battle with the enemy and unexpectedly routed them.[440] [51] The Romans pursued them as they fled in complete disorder and slew a great part of them, while the rest escaped to the ends of Libya. [52] Thus it came to pass that the Libyans who survived, few as they were in number and extremely poor, at long last and just barely managed to find some peace.

438. 4.21.27.

439. This was the battle of Marta, described by Corippus, *Iohannis*, book 6.

440. This campaign is described by Corippus, *Iohannis*, books 7–8.

Book Five

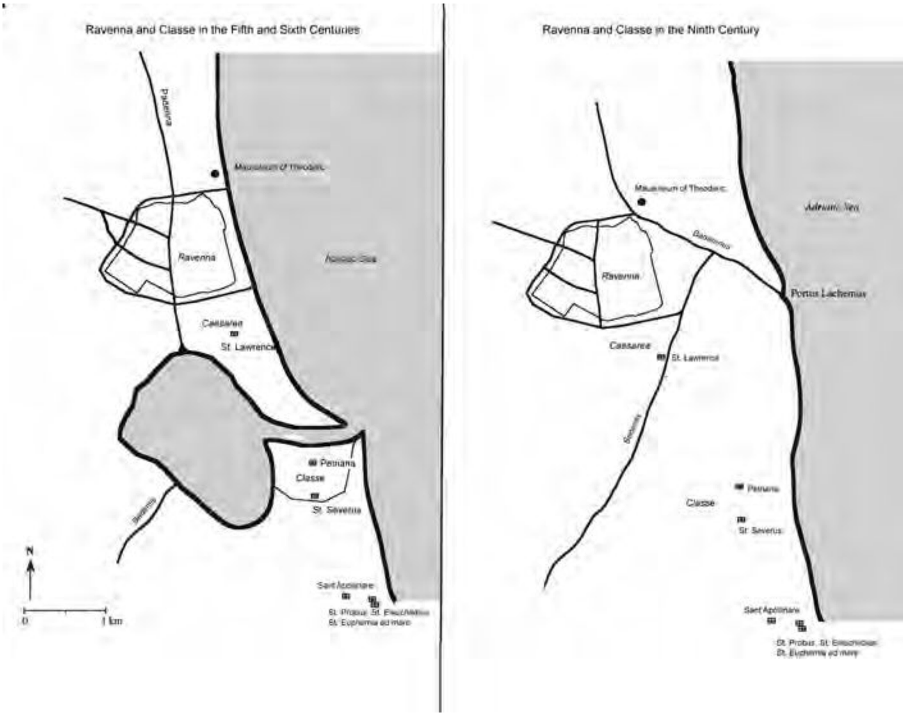
1. That, then, was how events unfolded for the Romans in Libya. I come now to the
Gothic War, telling first the history of the Goths and Italians before this war. [2] When
Zenon was reigning in Byzantion, the power in the West was held by Augustus, whom
the Romans used to call by the diminutive Augustulus because he assumed power while
still a child, and his father Orestes, a man of the greatest discretion, administered it *31 Oct.*
for him. [3] Now it happened a short time before that the Romans had led the Sciri, *475*
Alans, and other Gothic nations into an alliance with them, and from that time on they
suffered at the hands of Alaric and Attila the things that I recounted in the previous
books.[441] [4] In proportion as the barbarian element among them became strong, just
so did the prestige of the Roman soldiers decline, and under the fair name of alliance
they were increasingly compelled by force to be tyrannized by the intruders, so that
the latter ruthlessly forced many other measures upon the Romans against their will
and finally demanded that they distribute among them all the lands in Italy. [5] They
ordered Orestes to give them the third part of those lands and, when he would not agree
to this, they killed him immediately.[442] [6] Now there was a certain man among them *28 Aug.*
named Odoacer, one of the emperor's spearmen, and he then agreed to carry out *476*
their commands on condition that they placed him in charge. [7] When he had usurped
power in this way, he did the emperor no further harm but allowed him to live hence-
forth as a private citizen. [8] By giving a third of the land to the barbarians and, in this *Sept.*
way, gaining their allegiance most securely, he held the tyranny securely for ten years. *476*

[9] During that same time the Goths also, who had settled in Thrace with the emper-
or's permission, took up arms against the Romans under the leadership of Theoderic, a
man who was a patrician and had attained consular rank in Byzantion.[443] [10] But the *484*
emperor Zenon, who understood how to settle any situation to his advantage, encour-
aged Theoderic to march to Italy, attack Odoacer, and win for himself and the Goths
the western dominion. [11] For it was better for him, he said, especially as he had *488*
attained senatorial rank, to force out a usurper and rule over all the Romans and Italians
than incur the great risk of a struggle with the emperor. [12] Theoderic was pleased with
the suggestion and went to Italy, and he was followed by the Gothic army, who placed

441. Esp. 3.2–4.

442. Orestes was killed by Odoacer. There is debate among historians over this "third of the lands" and exactly how it was to be assigned to the barbarians.

443. In 461/462, when Theoderic was eight, he began a ten-year stay in Constantinople as a hostage. After his release, he quickly became one of the most powerful Gothic warlords in the Balkans, assisting Zenon to regain the throne in 476. He was rewarded with offices and titles and spent the next ten years involved in a complicated set of changing relationships in wars with rival warlords and Zenon himself.



Maps of Ravenna in the fifth and ninth centuries.

the women and children in their wagons and as many movable goods as they were able to take. [13] When they reached the Adriatic Sea, they were unable to cross it, as they had no ships at hand. So they made the journey around the gulf, advancing through the land of the Taulantioi and the other nations of that region.[444] [14] The forces of Odoacer met them but, after being defeated in many battles, they shut themselves up
489 with their leader in Ravenna and the strongest of their other towns. [15] The Goths laid siege to these places and captured them all, in one way or another as it chanced in each case, except that they were unable to capture Cesena, which is three hundred stades from Ravenna, or Ravenna itself, where Odoacer happened to be, either by force or negotiation. [16] For this city of Ravenna lies in a level plain at the end of the Adriatic Sea, being only two stades from the sea, and it is so situated as to be difficult to approach either by ship or a land army. [17] Ships cannot possibly put in to shore there because the sea itself prevents them by forming shoals for not fewer than thirty stades; consequently, the beach at Ravenna, although to the eye of sailors it appears near at hand, is in reality far away by reason of the sheer extent of the shoal water. [18] Nor can a land army approach it at all, for the river Po, also called the Eridanos, which comes from the boundaries of the Celtic lands, along with certain other navigable rivers and

444. The hinterland of Epidamnos-Dyrrachion, in modern Albania.



Gold medallion of Theoderic the Great, King of the Goths in Italy.

some marshes, encircle it on all sides and so cause the city to be surrounded by water. [19] In that place an amazing phenomenon occurs every day. Early in the morning the sea takes on the shape of a river and comes over the land for the distance of a day's journey for an active traveler, becoming navigable well into the mainland, and then it causes the inlet to disappear when it turns back in the late afternoon, gathering the stream back to itself. [20] All those, therefore, who have to bring supplies into the city or carry them out from there for trade or any other reason, place their cargoes in boats and, conveying them down to the place where the inlet is regularly formed, wait for the inflow. [21] When it comes, the boats are lifted little by little from the ground and float, and the sailors on them set to work and are already seafarers. [22] This is not the only place where this happens, for it is a regular occurrence along that whole coast as far as the city of Aquileia. [23] But it does not always happen in the same way. When the light of the moon is faint, the advance of the sea is not strong, but from the first half-moon until the second the inflow tends to be greater. So much for this matter.

[24] When three years had been spent by the Goths and Theoderic in their *493*
investment of Ravenna, the Goths, who were weary of the siege, and the followers of Odoacer, who were hard-pressed by a lack of provisions, came to an agreement with each other through the mediation of the priest of Ravenna,[445] the terms being that both Theoderic and Odoacer would hold Ravenna on terms of complete equality. For some time they observed the agreement, [25] but afterward
Theoderic caught Odoacer, they say, plotting against him, and, inviting him *15 Mar.*
to a feast with treacherous intent, slew him. He then won over as many of the *493*
enemy barbarians as happened to still survive and secured for himself the rule over both Goths and Italians. [26] Though he did not claim the right to assume either the garb or the name of an emperor of the Romans, and was called *rex* for the

445. The bishop's name was Ioannes; the negotiations lasted from February 493 to 5 March, when the gates were opened.

rest of his life (for the barbarians are accustomed to call their leaders that), still, in governing his own subjects he invested himself with all the qualities that are appropriate to one who is an emperor by nature. [27] For he was extremely careful to observe justice, preserved the laws on a sound basis, protected the land securely from the neighboring barbarians, and attained the highest possible degree of wisdom and courage. [28] Neither did he himself commit scarcely any act of injustice against his subjects nor did he allow anyone else to attempt it, except, of course, that the Goths distributed among themselves the lands that Odoacer had given to his own rebels. [29] In name Theoderic was a usurper, yet in fact he was truly an emperor no less than any who have distinguished themselves in this office from the beginning.[446] Love for him among both Goths and Italians grew to be great, and that too contrary to the ordinary habits of men. [30] For in all states different men have different preferences: the regime in power pleases for the moment only those who benefit from its acts, but offends those whose opinion it goes against.
30 Aug. 526 [31] But Theoderic reigned for thirty-seven years and, when he died, he had not only made himself an object of terror to all his enemies but he also left to his subjects a keen sense of bereavement at his loss.[447] He died in the following manner.

[32] Symmachus and his son-in-law Boethius were men of noble and ancient lineage, and both had been leading men in the Roman senate and consuls. [33] But because they practiced philosophy and were mindful of justice in a manner surpassed by no one else, relieving the poverty of both citizens and strangers by generous gifts of money, they attained great fame and induced the most evil men to envy them. [34] The latter slandered them to Theoderic and he, believing them, put these two men to death on the grounds that they were attempting sedition and confiscated their property to the public treasury.[448] [35] A few days later, while he was dining, the servants set before him the head of a great fish. This seemed to Theoderic to be the head of Symmachus newly butchered. [36] Indeed, with its teeth set in its lower lip and its eyes looking at him with a grim and insane stare, it did greatly resemble a person threatening him. [37] Terrified at the extraordinary prodigy and shivering excessively, he ran back to his own chambers; directing them to place many covers on him, he remained quiet. [38] But later he disclosed to his physician Elpidius all that had happened and wept for the wrong he had done to Symmachus and Boethius.[449] [39] Then, having lamented and grieved over that misfortune, he died soon afterward. This was the first and last act of injustice that he committed against his subjects, namely that he had not made a thorough investigation, as he usually did, before passing judgment on the two men.

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446. The phrasing is modeled on Thucydides, *History* 2.65.9, on Perikles.

447. This praise of Theoderic is partly modeled on Thucydides' praise of Perikles in *History* 2.65.

448. We do not know the exact grounds on which Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (consul in 510) was executed (probably in 524), followed (probably in 525) by the execution of his father-in-law Q. Aurelius Memmius Symmachus (consul in 485).

449. We have letters addressed to Helpidius, a deacon and doctor, by Ennodius, Avitus, and Cassiodorus. As for Theoderic's remorse, cf. Cambyses in Herodotos, *Histories* 3.64.2.

2. After his death the kingdom passed to Athalaric, the son of Theoderic's daughter; he was eight years old and was being reared by his mother Amalasuntha. [2] His father had already departed from among men.[450] Not long after Justinian succeeded to the imperial power in Byzantion. [3] Now Amalasuntha, as guardian of her child, administered the government with a high degree of wisdom and justice, displaying to a great extent a masculine temper. [4] As long as she stood at the head of the state she inflicted no bodily punishment upon any Roman or imposed a fine. [5] Furthermore, she did not yield to the Goths in their mad desire to wrong them, but she even restored to the children of Symmachus and Boethius their fathers' estates. [6] Now Amalasuntha wanted her son to resemble the rulers of the Romans in his way of life and was already compelling him to attend a grammarian. [7] She chose out three among the old men of the Goths whom she knew to be prudent and fair above all the others, and instructed them to live with Athalaric. But the Goths were not pleased with this. [8] Because of their desire to wrong their subjects, they wished to be ruled by him in a more barbarian fashion.[451] [9] On one occasion the mother, finding the boy doing some wrong in his chamber, struck him, and he went off in tears to the men's apartments. [10] Some Goths who met him made a great to-do about this and reviled Amalasuntha by claiming that she wished to do away with the boy as quickly as possible in order to marry a second husband and, with him, rule over the Goths and Italians. [11] All the notables among them gathered together and, coming before Amalasuntha, made the charge that their king was not being educated correctly from their point of view nor to his own advantage. [12] For letters, they said, are far removed from manliness, and the teaching of old men results for the most part in a cowardly and submissive spirit. [13] Therefore, a man who is to show daring in any work and become great in fame ought to be freed from the fear that teachers inspire and take his training in arms. [14] They added that even Theoderic would never allow any Goths to send their children to a grammarian, [15] for he used to say to them all that, if the fear of the strap once came over them, they would never be able to despise a sword or spear. [16] They demanded her to reflect that before he died her father Theoderic had become master of all this territory and had invested himself with a kingdom that was not his by right, yet he had not so much as heard of letters. [17] "Therefore, O queen," they said, "let these tutors go right now and give to Athalaric some boys of his own age as companions, who will mature in age with him and incite him to virtue according the custom of barbarians."

527 *531?*

[18] When Amalasuntha heard this, she did not approve, yet because she feared the plotting of these men she made it appear that their words pleased her and granted everything the barbarians asked of her. [19] When the old men had left Athalaric, he was given the company of boys who were to share his daily life, lads who had not yet come of age but were only a little older than him. As soon as he came of age, they

450. His father was Eutharic (consul 519), originally from Spain.

451. It is difficult to identify the leaders of this faction. It possibly included Theodahad, the next king (see below), and Tuluin, the commander of the army after 526.

began to entice him to drunkenness and sex with women, and made him extremely evil in character and stupid enough to disobey his mother. [20] Consequently, he refused to support her even though the barbarians were by now openly organizing against
533 her; in fact, they were boldly commanding the woman to leave the palace. [21] But Amalasuntha neither became frightened at the plotting of the Goths nor did she, as a woman, weakly give way but, still displaying royal qualities, she chose out three men who were the most notable among the barbarians and also the most responsible for the sedition against her and ordered them go to the borders of Italy, not together, however, but as far apart as possible from one another. The pretext was that they were being sent to guard the land against enemy attacks.[452] [22] Nevertheless, these men continued to prepare their plot against Amalasuntha through the help of friends and relations, who were still in communication with them, even traveling a long journey for the purpose. The woman, being unable to endure these things any longer, devised the following plan. [23] Sending to Byzantion she asked the emperor Justinian whether he would be willing to have Amalasuntha, the daughter of Theoderic, come to him, for she wished to depart immediately from Italy. [24] The emperor was pleased by the suggestion, invited her to come, and sent orders that the finest of the houses in Epidamnos be made ready so that, when Amalasuntha came there, she might lodge in it and spend as much time there as she wished before coming to Byzantion. [25] When Amalasuntha learned this, she chose out certain Goths who were energetic and especially devoted to her and sent them to kill the three whom I have just mentioned as being chiefly responsible for the sedition against her. [26] She herself placed all her possessions, including four hundred *kentenaria* of gold, in a single ship, embarked on it some of her most loyal followers, and instructed them to sail to Epidamnos. Upon arriving there, they were to anchor in its harbor but remove from the ship none of its cargo until she herself sent orders. [27] She did this because, if she learned that the three men had been killed, she could then remain there and summon the ship back, having no further fear from her enemies; but if it chanced that one of them was left alive and she had no good hope left, she intended to sail with all speed and find safety for herself and her possessions in the emperor's territory. [28] Such was the plan of Amalasuntha when she sent the ship to Epidamnos. When it arrived at the harbor of that city, those who had the money carried out her orders. [29] But a little later, when the murders had been accomplished as she wished, Amalasuntha summoned the ship back and, remaining at Ravenna, strengthened her rule as securely as possible.[453]

3. There was among the Goths one Theodahad by name, a son of Amalafrida, the sister of Theoderic, a man already of mature years, versed in Latin literature and the teachings

452. In 532, the Franks briefly occupied Gothic Arles.

453. The new order was reflected in the appointment of the Roman noble Liberius as commander of the Gothic army, in place of the (probably murdered) Tuluin, and Cassiodorus became praetorian prefect of Italy; see the programmatic statement of the new regime in his *Variae* 11.1.

of Plato[454] but entirely without experience in war and taking no part in active life, and yet he was extraordinarily accomplished at making money. [2] This Theodahad had gained possession of most of the lands in Tuscany and was eager to take the remainder from their owners by violent means. For to have a neighbor seemed to Theodahad a kind of misfortune.[455] [3] Now Amalasuntha was exerting herself to curb this desire of his,[456] and consequently he was always aggrieved with her and resentful. [4] He formed the plan, therefore, of handing Tuscany over to the emperor Justinian, in order *533*
to receive from him a great sum of money, the senatorial dignity, and be able to pass the rest of his life in Byzantion. [5] After Theodahad had formed this plan, there came from Byzantion to the chief priest of Rome two envoys, Hypatios, the priest of Ephesos, and Demetrios, from Philippoi in Macedonia, to confer about a doctrine of faith, which is a subject of disagreement and controversy among the Christians.[457] [6] As for the points in dispute, although I know them well, I will by no means mention them for I consider it a sort of insane stupidity to investigate the nature of God, asking what sort it is. [7] For man cannot, I think, accurately understand even human affairs, much less those pertaining to the nature of God.[458] I will therefore maintain a safe silence concerning these matters, simply for the sake of not discrediting old and venerable beliefs. [8] For my part, I will say nothing whatever about God save that he is altogether good and has all things in his power. [9] But let each one say whatever he thinks he knows about these matters, both priest and layman. As for Theodahad, he met these envoys secretly and directed them to report to the emperor Justinian what he had planned, explaining what has just been explained by me.

[10] But at this point Athalaric, having plunged into a drunken party that had no limits, was seized with a wasting disease. [11] Amalasuntha was therefore at a loss what to do, for, on the one hand, she had no confidence in the loyalty of her son, now that he had gone so far in his depravity, and, on the other, she thought that if Athalaric also was removed from among men, her life would not be safe thereafter, as she had clashed with the most notable Goths. [12] Thus she wanted to hand the power of the Goths and Italians over to the emperor Justinian, in order to save herself. [13] It happened *534*
now that Alexandros, a man of the senate, together with Demetrios and Hypatios,

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454. Theodahad's learning was praised by Amalasuntha when she elevated him to the throne (Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.3.4) and stressed in Theodahad's own proclamation to the Senate (ibid., 10.4).

455. Theodahad had previously been ordered to return land that he had seized, and reproached for avarice (Cassiodorus, *Variae* 4.39 and 5.12 [by Theoderic], also 3.15).

456. See the possible allusion to this in Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.4.4, and *Wars* 5.4.1–3 below.

457. Hypatios of Ephesos had represented the Chalcedonian side in the debate convened in the capital by Justinian in 532/533 (noting there that the works attributed to pseudo-Dionysios could not be authentic). He and Demetrios came to Italy with a letter from Justinian to pope John II (dated 6 June 533) which prompted a reply by the latter (dated 25 Mar. 534): both documents are in *CJ* 1.1.8.

458. Cf. *Secret History* 18.29 on Justinian's attempts to ascertain the nature of God.

had arrived there. [14] For when the emperor had heard that Amalasuntha's ship was anchored in the harbor of Epidamnos but that she herself was still tarrying even though much time had passed, he had sent Alexandros to investigate and report to him the whole situation regarding Amalasuntha. [15] The pretext was that the emperor had sent Alexandros as an envoy because he was greatly disturbed by the events at Lilybaeum that I have explained in an earlier book;[459] also because ten Huns from the army in Libya had fled and reached Campania, and Viliarit, the commander of Naples, had received them not at all against the will of Amalasuntha; and also because the Goths, in making war on the Gepids by Sirmium, had treated the city of Gratiana, situated at the border of Illyria, as a hostile town.[460] [16] So by way of protesting to Amalasuntha about these things, he wrote a letter and sent Alexandros. When the latter arrived in Rome, he left the priests there busied with the matters for which they had come, and he himself, journeying on to Ravenna and coming before Amalasuntha, reported the emperor's message secretly and openly delivered the letter to her. The letter said the following:

Justinian to Amalasuntha

[17] You have taken the fortress of Lilybaeum, which is ours, by force and are now holding it; and barbarians, my fugitives, you have received and have not even yet decided to restore them to me; and also you have treated my city of Gratiana in an outrageous way, although it does not belong to you at all. [18] Thus it is time for you to consider how all this is going to end.

[19] When this letter had been delivered to her and she had read it, she replied as follows:[461]

Amalasuntha to Justinian

One would reasonably expect an emperor who is great and who lays claim to virtue to assist an orphan child who does not in the least understand what is going on, rather than to quarrel with him for no cause at all. [20] For unless a contest is waged on even terms, even victory in it brings no honor. [21] But you threaten Athalaric on account of Lilybaeum, ten fugitives, and a mistake made by soldiers in going against their enemies, which through ignorance chanced to affect a friendly city. [22] Not like this! Not by you, O emperor! Recall that when you were making war upon the Vandals, not only did we not hinder you but quite eagerly even gave you free passage against the enemy, a market for your indispensable supplies,[462] and a multitude of horses that more than anything enabled you to defeat the enemy. [23] Yet we do not justly call someone a friend and ally merely for offering an alliance to his neighbors: he actually has to assist the other in war in every way that he has

459. 4.5.11–25. As the dispute over Lilybaeum must be dated to early 534, Alexandros cannot have been sent out from Constantinople with Hypatios and Demeterios; he must have joined up with them in Italy.

460. Around 530, Goths and Gepids had clashed by Sirmium, as a result of which the former expanded their Danubian holdings, pushing to Gratiana in Roman Moesia; a reference to this also in Cassiodorus, *Variae* 11.1.10–11.

461. Cf. the speech of the Corinthians in Thucydides, *History* 1.37–43.

462. 3.14.5–6.

need. [24] Consider that at that time your fleet had no other place at which to put in from the sea except Sicily, and that without the supplies bought there it could not go on to Libya. [25] Therefore you are indebted to us for the chief cause of your victory. For the one who provides a solution in a difficult situation is justly entitled also to the credit for the ensuing results. [26] What is sweeter for a man, O emperor, than to prevail over his enemies? Yet we now have been slighted in no small way, as we have not, according to the custom of war, been given our share of the spoils. [27] You are also claiming the right to take from us Lilybaeum in Sicily, which has belonged to the Goths from ancient times, a rock, O emperor, worth not so much as a piece of silver. Had it happened to belong to your realm from ancient times, you might fairly have granted it to Athalaric as a reward for his services, as he gave you assistance in a moment of pressing need.

[28] Such was the message that Amalasuntha wrote openly to the emperor, but secretly she agreed to put all of Italy into his hands. [29] The envoys returned to Byzantion and reported everything to the emperor Justinian, Alexandros telling what Amalasuntha had decided, and Demetrios and Hypatios everything that they had heard Theodahad say, adding that Theodahad enjoyed great power in Tuscany, where he had become the owner of most of the land and would have no difficulty in carrying out his agreement. [30] The emperor was overjoyed at this and immediately sent to Italy Petros, an Illyrian by birth from Thessalonike, a man who was one of the trained speakers in Byzantion, a discreet and gentle person and quite capable of persuading others.

4. While these things were transpiring, Theodahad was denounced before Amalasuntha by many Tuscans, who stated that he had done violence to all the people there and had without cause seized their estates, taking not only all private estates but especially those belonging to the royal household itself, which the Romans call *patrimonium*. [2] For this reason the woman called Theodahad to an investigation and when, confronted by his denouncers, he was proved guilty without any question, she compelled him to pay back everything he had wrongfully seized and then dismissed him. [3] In this way she gave the greatest offense to the man, and from that time she was on hostile terms with him, extremely distressed as he was because of his lust for money, seeing as he was now unable to steal and intimidate.

[4] At about this same time Athalaric, having wasted away by the disease, came to his end, having reigned for eight years. As for Amalasuntha, it was fated that she would end *2 Oct. 534* badly: she took no account of the nature of Theodahad and of what she had recently done to him, and supposed that she would suffer no harm at his hands if she now did the man a great favor. [5] She accordingly summoned him and, when he came, set out to win him over, saying that she had known for some time that her son was expected to die soon. She had heard the opinion of all the physicians, who were in agreement, and had herself perceived that the body of Athalaric continued to waste away. [6] As she saw that both the Goths and Italians had an unfavorable opinion of Theodahad, to whom the family of Theoderic was now reduced, she was now willing to clear him of this evil name so that it would not stand in his way if he were called to the throne. [7] But at the



Coin of Theodahad, King of the Goths in Italy.

same time, she explained, the question of justice troubled her, namely that those who claimed to have been wronged by him would have no one to whom they could report anything that happened to them, as they would now have their enemy as their lord. [8] For this reason, she invited him to the throne after his name was cleared in this way; still, it was necessary that he be bound by the most solemn oaths that while the name of the office was to be bestowed upon Theodahad, she herself would in fact hold power no less than before. [9] When Theodahad heard this, he swore to all the conditions that Amalasuntha wanted, but swore with treacherous intent, remembering all that she had previously done to him. [10] Thus Amalasuntha, being deceived by her own judgment and the oaths of Theodahad, established him on the throne. [11] Sending some Goths as envoys to Byzantion, she made this known to the emperor Justinian.[463]

Nov. 534

[12] When Theodahad received the supreme power, he began to act in all ways contrary to the hopes she had and the promises he made. [13] After winning over the relatives of the Goths who had been slain by her—they were both numerous and men of high standing among the Goths—he suddenly put to death some of Amalasuntha's men and imprisoned her, all before the envoys had even reached Byzantion. [14] There is a certain lake in Tuscany called Bolsena, within which rises an island, extremely small but with a strong fortress on it. [15] There Theodahad confined Amalasuntha and kept her under guard. Fearing that he had thereby given offense to the emperor, as actually proved to be the case, he sent some men of the Roman senate, Liberius and Opilio and certain others,[464] directing them to excuse his conduct to the emperor with all their power and assure him that Amalasuntha had suffered no harm at his hands, even

late 534

463. This diplomatic correspondence is in Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.1–2 (Amalasuntha and Theodahad writing separately to Justinian).

464. Liberius had worked loyally for Odoacer until his end (493), then served the Goths. After this mission, he switched to Justinian's side and served him loyally; he did not return to Italy until 550. For Opilio, see below.

though she had previously perpetrated irreparable outrages upon him. [16] He himself wrote in this sense to the emperor and also compelled Amalasuntha, against her will, to write the same thing. Such was the course of these events. [17] But Petros had already been sent by the emperor on an embassy to Italy with instructions to meet Theodahad without the knowledge of any others: Theodahad was to give pledges by an oath that none of their dealings would be divulged, and, with that security, Petros was then to make a settlement with him regarding Tuscany. [18] Meeting Amalasuntha in secret, he was also to make an arrangement with her regarding the whole of Italy that would be in the interests of both parties. [19] But openly his mission was to negotiate with regard to Lilybaeum and the other matters I just mentioned.[465] For as yet the emperor had heard nothing about the death of Athalaric, the accession of Theodahad, or the circumstances of Amalasuntha. [20] Petros was on his way when he met the envoys of Amalasuntha and first learned that Theodahad had come to the throne. [21] A little later, when he reached the city of Aulon, which lies on the Adriatic Sea, he met the delegation of Liberius and Opilio and learned everything that had taken place. He reported this to the emperor and remained there.

[22] When the emperor Justinian heard these things, he formed the purpose of throwing the Goths and Theodahad into confusion. Accordingly, he wrote a letter to Amalasuntha, stating that he was eager to give her every possible support, and he also directed Petros not to conceal this message but to make it known to Theodahad himself and all the Goths.[466] [23] When the envoys from Italy arrived in Byzantion, they reported the whole matter to the emperor, especially Liberius, [24] who was a man exceptionally upright and honorable and knew well how to show respect for the truth. [25] But Opilio alone declared with the greatest persistence that Theodahad had committed no offense against Amalasuntha.[467] When Petros arrived in Italy, it so happened that Amalasuntha was removed from among men.[468] [26] For the relatives of the Goths *30*
who had been slain by her came to Theodahad and declared that neither his life nor *Apr. 535*

465. 5.3.15.

466. It is clear from this and the next sentence that Petros had sent a messenger from Aulon who reached Justinian before Theodahad's delegation.

467. This Opilio, Theodahad's loyal envoy, is sometimes identified with the Opilio who informed against Boethius and led to his arrest (*Consolation of Philosophy* 1.4.17), though the name was common.

468. This was as close as Prokopios could come to saying that Petros was implicated in her murder, which is what he claims in the *Secret History* 16.1–5. According to that version, Petros had received secret orders from Theodora to arrange the queen's death, and the empress was even behind Petros' appointment as ambassador. However, when Petros was appointed, nothing was known of Theodahad's elevation, much less Amalasuntha's incarceration. Theodora would have had to send him her secret instructions while he was at Aulon. On the other hand, at the time of the murder Theodahad and his wife, Gudeliva, wrote letters to Theodora, pledging to contact her about anything that they might need from Justinian, thanking *her* for sending Petros to them, and telling her that they had arranged what she asked about "that certain person" (Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.20–21). These letters were brought to Constantinople by Petros himself.

theirs would be secure unless Amalasuntha was put out of the way as quickly as possible. [27] He gave in to them, and they immediately went to the island and killed Amalasuntha, [28] an act that grieved all the Italians extremely and the other Goths. [29] For the woman had the strictest regard for every kind of virtue, as was stated by me earlier.[469] [30] Petros protested openly to Theodahad and the other Goths that this terrible deed they had committed would lead to a truceless war between them and the emperor. [31] But Theodahad was stupid enough to hold the killers of Amalasuntha in honor and favor while he was trying to persuade Petros and the emperor that this unholy deed had not been committed by the Goths with his approval, but utterly against his will.

5. Meanwhile it happened that Belisarios had distinguished himself by the defeat of Gelimer and the Vandals. The emperor, upon learning the fate of Amalasuntha, imme-
spring 535 diately went to war, this being the ninth year of his reign. [2] He sent Mundo, the general of Illyria, to Dalmatia, which was subject to the Goths, with orders to make an attempt on Salona. Mundo was a barbarian by birth, but extremely loyal to the cause of the emperor and an able warrior.[470] Then he sent Belisarios by ship with four thousand soldiers from the regular units and *foederati*, and about three thousand more Isaurians. [3] The commanders were distinguished: Konstantinos and Bessas from Thrace, and Peranios from Iberia near Media, a man who was by birth a member of the royal family of the Iberians but had before this time deserted to the Romans because of his hatred for the Persians. The cavalry units were commanded by Valentinos, Magnos, and Innokentios, the infantry by Herodianos, Paulos, Demetrios, and Oursikinos, and the leader of the Isaurians was Ennes. [4] There followed also two hundred allied Huns and three hundred Moors. The general in supreme command over all was Belisarios, and he had many notable men as spearmen and guardsmen. [5] He was accompanied also by Photios, the son of his wife Antonina by a previous marriage. He was still a young man wearing his first beard, but possessed the greatest discretion and showed a strength of character beyond his years.[471] [6] The emperor instructed Belisarios to give out that his destination was Carthage, but as soon as they arrived at Sicily they were to disembark there as if compelled for some reason to do so, and make an attempt on the island. [7] If it proved possible to reduce it to subjection without any trouble, they were to take possession and not let it go again. But if they met with any obstacle, they were to sail on swiftly to Libya, giving no one an opportunity to perceive what their intention had been.

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469. 5.2.3.

470. Mundo was a son of a king of the Gepids who served Theoderic until the latter's death and, after 529, Justinian, who appointed him general of Illyria (529–536, with a brief break in 531). He had helped to suppress the Nika Riots; see 1.24.41.

471. The later adventures of Photios, trapped between his loyalty to Belisarios and the affairs of his mother, Antonina, are recounted by Prokopios in the *Secret History* 1–3.

[8] He also sent a letter to the leaders of the Franks which went as follows:[472]

> The Goths, having seized our Italy by violence, have not only refused absolutely to give it back, but have committed further acts of injustice against us which are unendurable and unacceptable. [9] For this reason we have been compelled to march against them, and it is reasonable that you join with us in waging this war, which is made yours as well as ours not only by the orthodox faith, which rejects the opinion of the Arians, but also by the enmity we both feel toward the Goths. *Justinian to the Franks*

[10] Such was the emperor's letter. Making a gift of money to them, he agreed to give them more as soon as they took an active part. And the Franks eagerly promised to fight as his allies. [11] Now Mundo and the army under his command entered Dalmatia and, engaging with the Goths who encountered them there, defeated them in battle and took possession of Salona. *summer 535* [12] As for Belisarios, he put in at Sicily and took Catana. Making it his base of operations, he took over Syracuse and the other cities by surrender without any trouble, except that the Goths who were keeping guard in Palermo, having confidence in its fortifications, which were strong, were unwilling to yield to Belisarios and ordered him to take his army away from there immediately. [13] Considering that it was impossible to capture the place from the landward side, Belisarios ordered the fleet to sail into the harbor, which extended right up to the wall. [14] For it was outside the circuit-wall and entirely without defenders. Now when the ships had anchored there, it was seen that the masts were higher than the parapet. [15] Immediately, then, he filled all the small boats of the ships with archers and hoisted them to the tops of the masts. [16] When the enemy were being shot at from these boats above, they fell into such an irresistible fear that they immediately delivered Palermo to Belisarios by surrender. [17] As a result, the emperor held all Sicily subject and tributary to himself. At that time a piece of good fortune happened there to Belisarios beyond the power of words to describe. [18] Having received the dignity of the consulship because of his victory over the Vandals,[473] while he was still holding this honor, and after he had won the whole of Sicily, on the last day of his consulship he marched into Syracuse, loudly applauded by the army and the Sicilians and throwing gold coins to all. *31 Dec. 535* [19] This was not intentionally arranged by him, but it was a happy chance that befell the man, that after recovering the whole of the island for the Romans he marched into Syracuse on that particular day. And so it was not in the senate-house in Byzantion, as was customary, but there that he laid down the office of consul and became an ex-consul. Thus, then, did Belisarios enjoy good fortune.

6. When Petros learned of the conquest of Sicily,[474] he was much more insistent in his effort to frighten Theodahad and would not let up. [2] Theodahad, turning coward

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472. At this time the realms of the Franks were ruled by two sons of Clovis and one grandson: Clothar I (Neustria), Childebert I (Paris), and Theudebert I (Austrasia).

473. 4.9.15.

474. It is possible that Petros had returned to Constantinople after the murder of Amalasuntha and had been sent back to Italy in late 535 after the successes in Sicily and Dalmatia.

and reduced to speechlessness no less than if he himself had been captured with Gelimer, entered into negotiations with Petros without the knowledge of any others, and came to an agreement with him *that* Theodahad would withdraw his claim to all of Sicily in favor of the emperor Justinian; *that* he would send him also a golden crown every year weighing three hundred *liters* and up to three thousand Gothic warriors, whenever he wished it; *that* Theodahad himself would have no authority to execute any priest or senator, or to confiscate his property to the public treasury except by decision of the emperor; [3] *that* if Theodahad wanted to advance any of his subjects to the patrician or other senatorial rank, this would not be done by him but he would ask the emperor to bestow it; [4] *that* the Roman populace, in acclaiming their sovereign, would always chant the name of the emperor first and then that of Theodahad, in the theaters, hippodromes, and wherever else it was necessary for such a thing to be done; [5] *that* no statue of bronze nor of any other material would ever be set up to Theodahad alone, but statues must always be made for both, and they must stand thus: on the right that of the emperor, and on the other side that of Theodahad. After Theodahad had written to confirm this agreement, he dismissed the ambassador.

[6] But a little later, terror took hold of the man's soul and led him into fears that knew no bound and tortured his mind, filling him with dread at the mention of war and reminding him that, if the agreement drawn up by Petros and himself did not please the emperor, war would immediately be upon him. [7] Once more he summoned Petros, who had already reached Albano, to a secret conference and asked the man whether he thought the agreement would please the emperor. [8] Petros replied that he supposed it would.

dialogue between Petros and Theodahad

"But if," said Theodahad, "these things do not please the man at all, what will happen then?"

[9] Petros replied "After that you will have to wage war, noble sir."

"But what is this?" he said, "Is it just, my dear ambassador?"

Petros shot back, saying "How is it not just, good sir, that the pursuits appropriate to each man's soul be preserved?"

"What is the meaning of that?" asked Theodahad.

[10] "It means," he said, "that your great interest is to philosophize, while Justinian's is to be a noble emperor of the Romans. The difference is that for one who has practiced philosophy it would never be fitting to bring about the death of men, especially in such great numbers, and I say that based on the teachings of Plato, which you evidently espouse, making it unholy for you not to be free from all bloodshed. But for *him* it is not at all inappropriate to acquire a land that belonged since ancient times to the realm that is his."

[11] Thereupon Theodahad, being convinced by this advice, agreed to abdicate his rule in favor of the emperor Justinian, and both he and his wife took an oath to this effect. [12] He then bound Petros by oaths that he would not divulge this agreement before he saw that the emperor would not accept the former one. [13] He sent with him

Rusticus, a priest who was highly loyal to him and a Roman citizen, to negotiate on the basis of this agreement. He also entrusted a letter to these men.

[14] So Petros and Rusticus, upon reaching Byzantion, reported the first decision to the emperor, just as Theodahad had directed them to do. But when the emperor was unwilling to accept the proposal, they revealed the plan that had been committed to writing afterward. [15] The contents of the letter were as follows:

Theodahad to Justinian

> I am no stranger to royal courts, but it was my fortune to have been born in the house of my uncle while he was king, and to have been raised in a manner worthy of my family. Yet I have had little experience of wars and the turmoil they entail. [16] Since my earliest years I have been passionately addicted to scholarship and have always devoted my time to it, so that up to the present time I have been far removed from the commotion of battle. [17] Therefore it is utterly absurd that I should aspire to the honors of royalty and lead a life full with danger, when it is possible for me to avoid them both. [18] Neither one is pleasant to me; the first because of its tendency to satiety, for it is an overabundance of all sweet things, and the second because lack of familiarity with such a life throws one into confusion. [19] As for me, if estates are provided to me that yield an annual income of no less than twelve *kentenaria*, I will regard the kingdom as worth less than them, and I will hand over to you forthwith the state of the Goths and Italians. [20] For I would find more pleasure in being a farmer free from all care than living amid a king's anxieties, with danger leading to more danger. [21] Do send a man as quickly as possible to whom I may fittingly deliver Italy and the affairs of the kingdom.

[22] That was what the letter of Theodahad said. The emperor was extremely pleased and replied as follows:

Justinian to Theodahad

> I have long heard that you were a man of sense, although now, having been taught by experience, I know it by the decision you have reached not to await the issue of war. [23] Certain men who in the past followed such a course were undone in the most decisive way. You will not regret having made us friends instead of enemies. [24] You will have what you ask of us and, in addition, you will be enrolled in the highest ranks of the Romans. [25] I have now sent Athanasios and Petros, so that each party may have surety by some agreement. Belisarios also will come to you any time now to complete everything that we have agreed upon between us.

early 536

[26] After writing this the emperor sent Athanasios, the brother of Alexandros, who had previously gone on an embassy to Athalaric, as I said,[475] and again Petros the orator, whom I have mentioned above,[476] instructing them to assign to Theodahad the estates of the royal household, which they call *patrimonium*, but to draw up a written

475. 5.3.13.

476. 5.3.30, 5.4.17.

document and secure oaths to fortify the agreement, whereupon they were to summon Belisarios from Sicily so that he could take the palace and all Italy and hold them under guard. [27] He wrote to Belisarios that as soon as they summoned him he was to go there with all speed.

late 535–early 536 **7.** But meanwhile, while the emperor was engaged in these negotiations and the envoys were traveling to Italy, the Goths, led by Asinarius, Gripa, and some others, had come with a great army to Dalmatia. [2] When they arrived near Salona, Maurikios, the son of Mundo, who was not marching out for battle but was on a scouting expedition with a few men, encountered them. [3] A violent battle ensued in which the foremost and noblest men among the Goths were killed as were almost all the Romans, including their commander Maurikios. [4] When Mundo heard this he was overcome with grief at the misfortune and, driven by a mighty fury, immediately charged against the enemy regardless of order. [5] The battle was stubbornly contested, and the result a Pyrrhic victory for the Romans. For though most of the enemy fell there and their rout was decisive, Mundo, who went on killing and pursuing the enemy wherever he chanced to find them and was unable to restrain himself because of the misfortune of his son, was wounded by some fugitive or other and fell. The pursuit ended there and the two armies separated. [6] At that time the Romans recalled the verse of the Sibyl that had been pronounced in earlier times and seemed to them a portent. The words of the oracle were that when Africa were held, the world would perish along with its offspring. [7] This, however, was not the real meaning of the oracle, but after intimating that Libya would be once more subject to the Romans, it added this also, that when that time came Mundo would perish together with his son. For it runs as follows: *Africa capta Mundus cum nato peribit.* [8] But as *mundus* in Latin means "world," they thought that the oracle referred to the whole world. So much, then, for this. As for Salona, it was not entered by anyone. [9] For the Romans went home, as they were left without a commander, and the Goths, seeing that not one of their nobles was left, grew afraid and took possession of the strongholds in the region. [10] They did not trust the defenses of Salona; besides, the Romans who lived there were not well disposed toward them.

[11] When Theodahad heard this, he paid no attention to the envoys who by now had come to him. For he was by nature highly untrustworthy and by no means kept his mind steady: the fortunes of the moment always reduced him to an irrational terror that knew no measure and was inappropriate to the situation, and then again brought him to the opposite extreme of unspeakable audacity. [12] So when he heard of the death of Mundo and Maurikios, he was lifted up extremely in a manner altogether unjustified by the events, and he saw fit to taunt the envoys when they came before him. [13] When Petros on one occasion protested that he was breaking his agreement with the emperor, Theodahad called both of them publicly and spoke as follows: [14]

Theodahad to Petros and Athanasios The position of envoy is a solemn one and in general has come to be held in honor among all men, but envoys preserve for themselves this prerogative only so long as they guard the dignity of their embassy by the propriety of their own conduct. [15]

> For men have decreed that an envoy may justly be killed when he is either found to have insulted a sovereign or has slept with a woman who is the wife of another.

[16] Such were the words that Theodahad cast before Peter, not because the latter had approached a woman but, apparently, in order to insist that there were charges that might lead to an ambassador's death. But the envoys replied as follows:

Petros and Athanasios to Theodahad

> [17] O ruler of the Goths, your words do not stand as you have stated them, nor can you perpetrate unholy deeds against envoys under the cover of flimsy pretexts. [18] It is not possible for an ambassador, even if he wishes it, to be an adulterer, as it is not easy for him even to have water without the consent of those who guard him. [19] As for the proposals that he has received from the lips of the one who has sent him, which he then reiterates, he himself cannot reasonably be held responsible for them in case they are not good, but he who has given the command should justly bear this charge, while the sole responsibility of the ambassador is to have discharged his mission. [20] We, therefore, will say all that we were instructed by the emperor to say when we were sent, and you should hear us quietly. For if you are disturbed by them, all you can do will be to wrong men who are ambassadors. [21] It is time, then, for you to perform willingly all that you promised the emperor. That is why we have come. You have already received the letter that he wrote to you, but as for the letter that he sent to the foremost among the Goths, we will give it to no others than to them.

[22] When the leading barbarians who were present heard this speech of the envoys, they instructed them to give to Theodahad what had been written to them. [23] It ran as follows:

Justinian to the Goths

> It has been the object of our concern to receive you back into our republic, a prospect that should reasonably please you. For you would come to us not in order to be diminished but to be more honored. [24] Besides, we are not inviting the Goths to enter into strange or alien customs but those of a people with whom you were once familiar, although you have by chance been separated from them for a while. For these reasons Athanasios and Petros have been sent to you, and you ought to assist them in all things.

[25] Such was the content of this letter. But after Theodahad read everything, he not only decided not to implement the promises he had made to the emperor, he also put the envoys under a strict guard.[477]

early 536

[26] When the emperor Justinian heard these things and also what had happened in Dalmatia, he sent Konstantianos, who commanded the imperial grooms,[478] into Illyria with orders to gather an army from there and make an attempt on Salona, in whatever way he was able. He also commanded Belisarios to enter Italy with all speed and treat the

477. Petros and Athanasios were held under guard for three years, 536–539; see 6.22.23–24 for their release.

478. I.e., *comes sacri stabuli*.

Goths as enemies. [27] So Konstantianos came to Epidamnos and spent some time there gathering an army. In the meantime, the Goths, under the leadership of Gripa, came with another army into Dalmatia and took over Salona. [28] Konstantianos, when his preparations were as complete as possible, departed from Epidamnos with his whole fleet and cast anchor at Epidauros, which is on the right as one sails into the Adriatic Sea.[479] Now it chanced that some men were there whom Gripa had sent as spies. [29] When they took note of the ships and the army of Konstantianos it seemed to them that both the sea and the whole land were full of soldiers and, returning to Gripa, they declared that Konstantianos was bringing against them not a few tens of thousands of men. [30] He, plunged into great fear, thought it inexpedient to meet their attack, but at the same time was unwilling to be besieged by the emperor's army, which completely commanded the sea. [31] He was disturbed most of all by the fortifications of Salona, the greater part of which had already fallen down, and by the inhabitants' extremely suspicious attitude toward the Goths. [32] For this reason he departed from there with his whole army as quickly as possible and made camp in the plain between Salona and the city of Scardona.[480] Konstantianos, sailing with all his ships from Epidauros, put in at Lesina, an island in the gulf.[481] [33] From there he sent out some of his followers to investigate Gripa's situation and report it to him. After receiving a full account, he sailed straight for Salona with all speed. [34] When he reached a place close to it, he disembarked his army on the mainland and himself remained quiet there. But he selected five hundred from the army, setting over them as commander Siphilas, one of his own spearmen, and commanded them to seize the narrow pass which, as he had been informed, was in the suburb of the city. Siphilas did this. [35] Konstantianos and his whole land army then entered Salona on the following day, and the fleet anchored close by. [36] Konstantianos proceeded to repair the fortifications of the city, building up in haste all parts of them that had fallen down. Gripa and the Gothic army, on the seventh day after the Romans had taken Salona, picked up and went to Ravenna. Thus Konstantianos gained possession of all Dalmatia and Liburnia, bringing over to his side all the Goths who were settled there. [37] Such were the events in Dalmatia. The winter drew to a close, and thus ended the first year of this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[482]

mid-536 **8.** As for Belisarios,[483] leaving guards in Syracuse and Palermo, he crossed with the rest of the army from Messina to Reggio (where the myths of the poets place Skylla and

479. Modern Cavtat (Ragusa Vecchia).

480. Near modern Croatian Šibenik.

481. Modern Croatian Hvar.

482. Prokopios here begins to use the Thucydidean dating formula whose "years" reach from summer to the following spring. It is likely that he has placed the events in Dalmatia, even though they probably took place in the summer of 536, at the end of the year 535/536, and now he begins with his account of the year 536/537.

483. Belisarios had meanwhile (after Easter 536) suppressed the revolt of Stotzas in North Africa: 4.14–15.

Charybdis), and every day the people of that place kept coming over to him. [2] For as their towns had been without walls since ancient times, they had no means at all of guarding them, and because of their hostility toward the Goths were, as was natural, greatly dissatisfied with the current regime. [3] Ebrimuth came over to Belisarios as a deserter from the Goths, together with all his followers; he was Theodahad's son-in-law, being married to Theudenantha, his daughter. He was immediately sent to the emperor and received many gifts of honor and attained patrician rank. [4] The land army then marched from Reggio through Bruttium and Lucania while the fleet of ships accompanied it, sailing close to the mainland. [5] When they reached Campania, they came upon a city by the sea, Naples by name, which was strong because of the nature of its site and contained a large garrison of Goths. [6] Belisarios commanded the ships to anchor in the harbor, which was beyond the range of missiles, while he himself made camp near the city. He first took possession by surrender of the fort which is in the suburb, and afterward permitted the inhabitants of the city at their own request to send some of their notables into his camp in order to tell him where they stood and, after receiving his reply, report it to the populace. [7] Immediately, the Neapolitans sent Stephanus. Coming before Belisarios, he spoke as follows:[484]

Oct.–Nov. 536

Stephanus to Belisarios

> You are not acting justly, O general, in marching against men who are Romans and have done no wrong, who inhabit a small city and have a garrison of barbarian masters, so that it is not even in our power, if we desire to do so, to oppose them. [8] But it so happens that even these guards had to leave their wives, children, and most precious possessions in the hands of Theodahad before they came to keep guard over us. [9] Therefore, if they treat with you at all, they will be betraying, not the city, but themselves. [10] If one must speak the truth with no disguise, you have not deliberated to your advantage either in coming against us. For if you capture Rome, Naples will be subject to you without any further trouble, whereas if you are repulsed from there, it is likely that you will not be able to hold even this city securely. [11] Consequently the time you spend on this siege will be wasted for no purpose.

So spoke Stephanus.

[12] Belisarios replied as follows:

Belisarios to Stephanus

> Whether we acted wisely or not in deciding to come here is not a question we intend to put before the Neapolitans. But we desire that you consider carefully such matters as are appropriate to your deliberations and then act in accordance with your own interests. [13] Receive the emperor's army into your city, which has come to secure your freedom and that of the other Italians,[485] and

484. The following exchange is partly modeled on that in Thucydides between Archidamos and the Plataians (*History* 2.71–72), just as the siege of Naples in general is modeled on the siege of Plataia there. Belisarios' efforts to persuade the Italians to accept his freedom recall the similar efforts by Brasidas in the north (e.g., *History* 4.87–88, 4.120).

485. Cf. Brasidas at Akanthos in Thucydides, *History* 4.68.1.

> do not choose what will bring upon you the most grievous misfortunes. [14] For those who go to war in order to rid themselves of slavery or any other shameful thing have a double good fortune if they fare well in the struggle, because along with their victory they have also acquired freedom from oppression, while if defeated they have some consolation for themselves, in that they have not of their own free will chosen to follow the worse fortune. [15] But as for those who have the opportunity to be free without fighting but enter into a struggle in order to make their condition of slavery permanent, such men have failed in the most vital point even if it so happens that they prevail, and if in the battle they fare less happily than they wished, they will have, along with their general ill fortune, also the calamity of defeat. As for the Neapolitans, then, let these words of ours suffice. [16] But as for the Goths who are present, we give them a choice, either to array themselves hereafter on our side under the great emperor, or to go to their homes entirely free from harm. [17] Because if both you and they disregard all these considerations and dare to raise arms against us, it will be necessary for us also, if God so wills, to treat whomever we meet as an enemy. [18] If, however, it is the will of the Neapolitans to choose the cause of the emperor and thus be rid of so cruel a slavery,[486] I take it upon myself, giving you pledges, to promise that you will receive at our hands the treatment that the Sicilians lately hoped for, and about which they were unable to say that we had sworn falsely.

[19] Such was the message that Belisarios instructed Stephanus to take back to the people. But in private he promised him large rewards if he inspired the Neapolitans with loyalty to the emperor. [20] Stephanus came into the city, reported the words of Belisarios, and expressed his opinion that it was disadvantageous to fight against the emperor. [21] He was assisted by Antiochos, a man of Syria who was long resident in Naples because of his shipping business, who had a great reputation there for wisdom and justice. [22] But there were two men, Pastor and Asclepiodotus, trained speakers and illustrious men among the Neapolitans, who were very friendly toward the Goths and quite unwilling to change the present arrangement. [23] These two, planning to block the negotiations, led the multitude to demand many serious concessions and to pressure Belisarios to promise on oath that they would immediately obtain what they were asking for. [24] After writing in a document demands the likes of which no one would have supposed that Belisarios would accept, they gave it to Stephanus. [25] And he, returning to the emperor's army, showed the document to the general and asked him whether he was willing to carry out all the proposals that the Neapolitans made and to take an oath concerning them. Belisarios promised that they would all be fulfilled for them and sent him back. [26] When the Neapolitans heard this, they were in favor of accepting the general's assurances at once and began to urge that the emperor's army be received into the city with all speed. [27] For he declared that no harm would come to them, at any rate if the case of the Sicilians provided sufficient evidence: it had recently happened to them that they exchanged their barbarian tyrants for the imperial authority

486. Cf. Brasidas in Thucydides, *History* 4.86.1.

of Justinian, and as a result were not only free but also untroubled by any difficulty. [28] Swayed by great excitement, they were about to go to the gates in order to throw them open. Though the Goths were not pleased with what they were doing, still, they were unable to prevent it and stood out of the way. [29] But Pastor and Asclepiodotus called the people and all the Goths together in one place, and spoke as follows:

Pastor and Asclepiodotus to the Neapolitans and Goths

> It is not at all unnatural for the populace of a city to abandon themselves and their own safety, especially if, without consulting any of their notables, they make an independent decision regarding supreme matters. [30] But it is necessary for us, who are on the verge of perishing together with you, to offer this advice as a last contribution to the fatherland. [31] We see, then, fellow citizens, that you are eager to betray both yourselves and the city to Belisarios, who promises to confer many benefits upon you and swear the most solemn oaths in confirmation of his promises. [32] Now if he were able to promise you this also, that to him will come victory in the war, no one would deny that the course you are taking is to your advantage. [33] For it is great folly not to gratify in every way him who is to become master. But if the outcome is uncertain, and no man in the world is in a position to guarantee the decision of fortune, consider what sort of misfortunes you hasten to attain. [34] If the Goths overcome their adversaries in the war, they will punish you as enemies who did them the foulest wrong. [35] For you are committing treason not under constraint of necessity, but out of deliberate cowardice. So that even to Belisarios, if he prevails over his enemies, we will perhaps appear untrustworthy and as betrayers of our rulers, and, having shown ourselves deserters, we will in all likelihood have a garrison set over us permanently by the emperor. [36] For he who has found a traitor is pleased at the moment of victory by the service rendered, but a suspicion sets in later based on what he has done and he comes to hate and fear his benefactor, having firsthand knowledge of his faithlessness. [37] If, however, we show ourselves faithful to the Goths at the present time and manfully withstand the danger, the Goths will give us great rewards if they defeat the enemy, whereas Belisarios, if it should so happen that he is the victor, will be prone to forgive. [38] For loyalty that fails is punished by no man unless he is foolish. [39] What has happened to you that you are in terror of being besieged by the enemy? You lack no provisions, have not been deprived by blockade of any of the necessities of life, and so may sit at home, confident in the fortifications and your garrison here. In our opinion, even Belisarios would not have consented to this agreement with us if he had any hope of capturing the city by force. [40] If he desired to do what is just and in our interest, he should not be trying to frighten the Neapolitans or to establish his own power by means of an act of injustice on our part toward the Goths; rather, he should do battle with Theodahad and the Goths, so that without danger to us or treason on our part the city might come into the power of the victors.

[41] When they had finished speaking, Pastor and Asclepiodotus brought forward the Jews, who promised that the city would lack no necessities, and the Goths on

their part promised that they would guard the circuit-wall safely. [42] The Neapolitans, moved by these arguments, urged Belisarios to depart from there with all speed. He, however, began the siege. [43] He made many attempts upon the circuit-wall, but was always repulsed, losing many of his soldiers, especially those who had some claim to valor. [44] For the wall of Naples was inaccessible, on one side because of the sea and on the other because of the difficult terrain, so those who planned to attack it could gain entrance at no point, both due to its general situation and because the ground sloped steeply. [45] Belisarios cut the aqueduct that brought water into the city, but this did not seriously disturb the Neapolitans, as there were wells inside the circuit-wall that sufficed for their needs and kept them from feeling the loss of the aqueduct too keenly.

9. So the besieged, without the knowledge of their enemy, sent to Theodahad in Rome begging him to come to their help with all speed. But Theodahad was not making the least preparation for war, being by nature unmanly, as was said before.[487] [2] They say that something else happened to him, which terrified him extremely and reduced him to still greater anxiety. To me, at any rate, the story does not appear to be reliable, but even so it will be told. [3] Theodahad even before this time had been prone to make inquiries of those who professed to foretell the future, and at that time he was at a loss what to do in the present situation, which more than anything else tends to drive men to seek out prophecies. So he asked a certain Hebrew who had a great reputation for this sort of thing, what outcome the present war would have. [4] The Hebrew instructed him to confine three groups of ten pigs each in three huts and, after giving each group respectively the names of Goths, Romans, and soldiers of the emperor, to wait quietly for a set number of days. [5] Theodahad did this. When the appointed day had come, they both went into the huts and looked at the pigs. They found that all those which had been given the name of Goths were dead save two, whereas all except a few were living which had received the name of the emperor's soldiers; as for those which had been called Romans, it so happened that, although the hair of all had fallen out, yet about half of them survived. [6] When Theodahad saw this and deduced the outcome of the war, a great fear, they say, came upon him, as he knew well that the Romans would die to half their number and be deprived of their possessions,[488] but that the Goths would be defeated and their race reduced to a few, and that victory in the war would come to the emperor, with the loss of but a few of his soldiers. [7] For this reason, they say, Theodahad felt no impulse to enter into a struggle with Belisarios. As for this story, let each express his own view depending on whether he believes or doubts it.

[8] As he besieged the Neapolitans by both land and sea, Belisarios was growing irritated. He was coming to think that they would never yield to him, nor could he hope that the city would be captured, as he was finding that the difficulty of its position was proving a very serious obstacle. [9] The time also that was being wasted there distressed

487. 5.3.1.

488. I.e., the Italians.

him, for he was calculating how to avoid going against Theodahad and Rome in the winter. [10] Indeed, he had already given orders to the army to pack up, intending to depart from there as quickly as possible. But while he was in the greatest perplexity, it came to pass that he met the following good fortune. [11] One of the Isaurians desired to see the construction of the aqueduct and to discover in what manner it provided a supply of water to the city. [12] So he entered it far from the city, where Belisarios had broken it open, and walked along it with no difficulty, for the water had stopped running as the aqueduct had been cut. [13] But when he came near to the circuit-wall, he found a large rock, not placed there by the hand of man but part of the natural formation of the place. [14] Those who had built the aqueduct many years before, after they had attached the masonry to this rock, had made a tunnel from that point on, not sufficiently large, however, for a man to pass through, but large enough to allow the water to pass. [15] For this reason it happened that the width of the aqueduct was not everywhere the same, but one came to a narrow place at that rock that was impassable for a man, especially if he wore armor or carried a shield. [16] When the Isaurian understood this, it seemed to him that it would be possible for the army to enter into the city if they made the tunnel at that point a little wider. [17] But he was a nobody and had never spoken with any of the commanders, so he brought the matter before Paukaris, an Isaurian, a distinguished guardsman of Belisarios. Paukaris immediately reported the whole matter to the general. [18] Belisarios, pleased by the report, took heart and, by promising to reward the man with great sums of money, induced him to make the attempt; he commanded him to take along some Isaurians and cut a passage in the rock as quickly as possible, taking care to give no sign to anyone of what they were doing. [19] Paukaris then selected some Isaurians who were thoroughly suitable for the work, and secretly got inside the aqueduct with them. [20] Coming to the place where the rock constricted the passage, they began their work, not cutting the rock with picks or mattocks, so as not to reveal to the enemy what they were doing by their blows, but scraping it persistently with sharp instruments of iron. [21] In a short time the work was done, so that a man wearing armor and carrying a shield was able to go through at that point.

[22] When everything was perfectly ready, the thought occurred to Belisarios that if the army made its entry into Naples by an act of war, the result would be that lives would be lost and all other things would happen that usually follow the capture of a city by an enemy. [23] Summoning Stephanus, he spoke as follows:

Belisarios to Stephanus

> I have witnessed the capture of cities many times and am well acquainted with what takes place at such a time. [24] They slay all the men of every age and, as for the women, although they beg to die, they are not given the gift of death but are carried off for outrage and suffer treatment that is abominable and most pitiable. [25] The children are deprived of their proper maintenance and education, and are forced to be slaves, and slaves of the men who are the most hateful of all—those on whose hands they see the blood of their fathers. [26] I set aside here, my dear Stephanus, the flames that destroy properties and blots out

> the beauty of the city. When I see Naples falling victim to such a fate, as in the mirror of the cities that have been captured in times past, I am moved to pity it and you its inhabitants. [27] I have ready now against it such devices as will make its capture inevitable. But I pray that an ancient city, which for ages has been inhabited by Christian Romans, may not meet with such a fortune, especially at my hands as commander of Roman soldiers, not least because in my army are a multitude of barbarians who have lost brothers or relatives before the wall of this town. I will be unable to control the fury of these men if they capture the city by act of war. [28] While, therefore, it is still within your power to choose and act to your advantage, adopt the better course and avoid misfortune. For when it falls upon you, as it probably will, you will not justly blame fortune but your own judgment.

[29] With these words Belisarios dismissed Stephanus. He went before the people of Naples in tears and reported with bitter lamentation all that he had heard Belisarios say. [30] But it was not fated that the Neapolitans become subjects of the emperor scot-free, so they neither feared nor decided to yield to Belisarios.

10. Belisarios then prepared to enter the city as follows. Selecting at nightfall about four hundred men and appointing as commanders over them Magnos, a cavalry officer, and Ennes, the leader of the Isaurians, he commanded them all to put on their armor, take up their shields and swords, and remain quiet until he himself gave the signal. [2] He summoned Bessas and ordered him to stay with him, for he wished to consult with him on a matter pertaining to the army. [3] When it was well on in the night, he explained to Magnos and Ennes the task before them, pointed out the place where he had previously cut the aqueduct, and ordered them to lead the four hundred men into the city, taking lanterns with them. [4] He sent with them two men skilled in the use of the trumpet, so that as soon as they got inside the circuit-wall they might be able both to throw the city into confusion and notify their own men what they were doing. [5] He himself held in readiness a great number of ladders previously constructed. So these men entered the aqueduct and were proceeding toward the city, while he with Bessas and Photios remained at his post and was attending to all details with their help. [6] He also sent to the camp, commanding the men to remain alert and keep their weapons in their hands. He also kept near him a large force, those whom he considered most daring. Now of the men who were going to the city more than half grew terrified at the danger and turned back. [7] Magnos could not persuade them to follow him, although he urged them again and again, he returned with them to the general. [8] Belisarios, reviling them, selected two hundred of the soldiers with him, ordering them to go with Magnos. Photios, who wanted to lead them, leaped into the channel, but Belisarios prevented him. [9] Then those who were fleeing from the danger, put to shame by the railings of the general and Photios, took heart to face it once more and followed the others. [10] Belisarios, fearing that their operations might be perceived by some of the enemy, who were guarding the tower that happened to be nearest to the aqueduct, went to

that place and commanded Bessas to carry on a conversation in the Gothic language with the barbarians there, in order to prevent them from hearing any clanging of the weapons. [11] Bessas shouted to them loudly, urging them to go over to Belisarios and promising that they would have many rewards. [12] But they jeered at him, insulting both Belisarios and the emperor. That, then, was what Belisarios and Bessas were doing.

[13] Now the aqueduct of Naples is covered not only until it reaches the wall, but remains so as it extends to a great distance inside the city, being carried on a high arch of baked bricks. Consequently, when the men under the command of Magnos and Ennes had got inside the fortifications, they were one and all unable to infer where in the world they were. [14] Furthermore, they could not get out at any point until the first of them came to a place where the aqueduct chanced to be without a roof and where stood a building that was entirely neglected. [15] Now inside this building there lived a certain woman, alone with utter poverty as her only companion, and an olive tree had grown out over the aqueduct. [16] So when these men saw the sky and perceived that they were in the midst of the city, they began to plan how they might get out, but they had no means of leaving the aqueduct either with or without their arms. For the structure happened to be very high at that point and there were no stairs to the top. [17] The soldiers were in a state of great perplexity and were beginning to crowd each other greatly as they collected there (as the men in the rear kept coming up, a great throng was already beginning to gather), the thought occurred to one of them to make trial of the ascent. [18] He immediately laid down his arms and, forcing his way up with hands and feet, reached the woman's house. [19] Seeing her there, he threatened to kill her unless she remained silent. She was terror-stricken and remained speechless. He then fastened to the trunk of the olive tree a strong strap and threw the other end of it into the aqueduct. So the soldiers, laying hold of it one at a time, barely managed to make the ascent. [20] After all had come up and a fourth part of the night still remained, they proceeded toward the wall. They slew the garrison of two of the towers before the men had an inkling of the trouble. These towers were on the northern part of the walls, where Belisarios was stationed with Bessas and Photios, anxiously awaiting the course of events. [21] So while the trumpeters were summoning the army to the wall, Belisarios was placing the ladders against the walls and commanding the soldiers to climb them. [22] But it so happened that not one of the ladders reached as far as the battlements. For as the workmen had not made them in sight of the wall, they had not been able to arrive at the proper length. [23] For this reason they bound two together, and it was only by using both of them for the ascent that the soldiers got above the level of the battlements. Such was the progress of events with Belisarios.

[24] On the side of the circuit-wall facing the sea, where the guard was kept not by barbarians, but Jews, the soldiers were unable either to use the ladders or to scale the wall. [25] For the Jews had already given offense to the enemy by blocking their efforts to capture the city without a fight, and for this reason they had no hope if they fell into their hands. So they kept fighting stubbornly: although they could see that the city had already fallen, they held out beyond all expectation against the assaults of their

opponents. [26] But when day came and some of those who had mounted the wall came against them, then at last they too, now that they were being shot at from behind, took to flight and Naples was captured by storm. By this time the gates were thrown open and the whole Roman army came in. [27] Those who were stationed about the gates looking to the east set fire to those gates, which were altogether unguarded, because they had no ladders at hand. [28] That part of the wall had been deserted, for the guards had taken to flight. [29] Then a great slaughter took place, for all of them were furious, especially those who had chanced to have a brother or other relative slain in the fighting at the wall. They kept killing all whom they met, regardless of age, and dashing into the houses they made slaves of the women and children and secured the valuables as plunder. In this the Massagetai outdid the rest, for they did not even hold back from the sanctuaries, killing many who had taken refuge in them, until Belisarios, going around to every part of the city, put a stop to it. Calling all together, he spoke as follows: [30]

Belisarios to the Roman army

> Seeing as God has permitted us to win and attain the greatest glory by putting under our hand a city never before captured, it is necessary that we not fall short of his grace but, by our humane treatment of the vanquished, to make it plain that we conquered these men justly. [31] Do not, then, show a boundless hatred for the Neapolitans and do not allow your hostility toward them to exceed the limits of war. For no victor still hates the men he has vanquished. [32] By killing them you will not be ridding yourselves of enemies for the future, but you will be suffering a loss: the death of your own subjects. So do these men no more harm, nor give in wholly to anger. [33] For it is a disgrace to prevail over the enemy only then to succumb to anger. So let their possessions suffice for you as the rewards of your valor, but let their wives, together with the children, go back to the men. And let the conquered learn by experience what kind of friends they have lost by reason of foolish counsel.

[34] After speaking thus, Belisarios released to the Neapolitans all their women, children, and slaves, with no insult having been experienced by them, and he reconciled them to the soldiers. [35] Thus it came to pass for the Neapolitans that on that day they both became captives and regained their liberty, and they recovered the most precious of their possessions. [36] For those of them who happened to have gold or anything else of value had previously concealed it by burying it in the earth, and in this way they succeeded in hiding from the enemy the fact that in getting back their houses they were recovering their money also. The siege had lasted about twenty days, and ended thus. [37] As for the Goths who were captured in the city, not fewer than eight hundred, Belisarios protected them from all harm and held them in no less honor than his own soldiers.

[38] Pastor, who had been leading the people on a foolish course, as I previously explained,[489] fell into a fit of apoplexy upon seeing the city captured and died suddenly, although he had neither been ill before nor suffered any harm from anyone. [39] But

489. 5.8.22–23, 5.8.29–41.

Asclepiodotus, who had collaborated with him, came before Belisarios with those of the notables who survived. [40] Stephanus mocked and reviled him with these words:

> *Stephanus to Asclepiodotus*
>
> See, most wicked of men, what evils you have brought to your fatherland, by selling the safety of the citizens for loyalty to the Goths. [41] And if things had gone well for the barbarians, you would have claimed the right to be a hireling in their service and to bring each one of us, who gave the better counsel, to court on a charge of betraying the city to the Romans. [42] But now that the emperor has captured the city and we have been saved by the uprightness of this man, you have recklessly dared to come into the presence of the general as if you had done no harm to the Neapolitans or the emperor's army! You will meet the punishment you deserve.

[43] Such were the words hurled against Asclepiodotus by Stephanus, who was deeply grieved by the misfortune of the city. And Asclepiodotus replied to him as follows:

> *Asclepiodotus to Stephanus*
>
> You are unaware, good sir, that you have been heaping praise upon us, when you reproach us for loyalty to the Goths. [44] For no one could ever be loyal to his masters when he is in danger except through firm conviction. As for me, then, the victors will have in me as true a guardian of the state as they had lately found in me an enemy, for he whom nature has endowed with the virtue of loyalty does not change his conviction with his fortune. [45] But you, should their affairs not prosper as before, would listen readily to the overtures of their enemies. For he who is afflicted by mental inconstancy repudiates his loyalty to even his dearest friends as soon as he becomes afraid.

[46] Such were the words of Asclepiodotus. But the populace of Naples, when they saw him leaving, gathered in a body and began to charge him with responsibility for all that had befallen them. They did not leave him until they killed him and tore his body into small bits. [47] After that they came to the house of Pastor, looking for the man. When the servants insisted that Pastor was dead, they were unwilling to believe them until they were shown the man's body. And the Neapolitans impaled him in the suburb. [48] Then they begged Belisarios to pardon them for what they had done while moved with just anger and, receiving his forgiveness, they dispersed. Such was the outcome for the Neapolitans.

11. But the Goths who were at Rome and in the country around it had even before this regarded with great amazement the inactivity of Theodahad, because even though the enemy was in his neighborhood he was unwilling to engage them in battle, and they felt among themselves much suspicion toward him, believing that he was deliberately betraying the cause of the Goths to the emperor Justinian and cared for nothing else than that he himself might live quietly, with as much money as possible. Accordingly, when they heard that Naples had been captured, they began immediately to make all these accusations against him openly and gathered at a place 280 stades distant from Rome, which

the Romans call Regata. It seemed best to them to make camp in that place, for there are extensive plains there with pasture for horses. [2] And a river also flows by, which the inhabitants call Decemnovium in the Latin tongue, because it flows past nineteen milestones, a distance that amounts to 113 stades, before it empties into the sea near the city of Terracina. Near that place is Mount Circeo, where they say Odysseus met Circe, although the story does not seem to me trustworthy, for Homer declares that Circe lived on an island.[490] [3] This, however, I am able to say, that this Mount Circeo, extending as it does far into the sea, resembles an island, so that both to those who sail close to it and those who walk to the shore in that area it has every appearance of being an island. Only when a man gets on it does he realize that he was deceived in his former opinion. [4] For this reason Homer perhaps called the place an island. But I return to the previous narrative.

[5] After gathering at Regata, the Goths chose as king over them and the Italians *Nov. 536* Vittigis, a man who was not of an illustrious house but had previously won great renown in the battles by Sirmium, when Theoderic was waging the war against the Gepids.[491] [6] Theodahad, therefore, upon hearing this, rushed off in flight and headed for Ravenna. But Vittigis quickly sent Optaris, a Goth, instructing him to bring Theodahad alive or dead. [7] Now it happened that this Optaris was hostile to Theodahad for the following reason. Optaris was wooing a certain young woman who was an heiress and extremely beautiful to look upon. [8] But Theodahad, moved by a bribe, took the woman he was wooing from him and betrothed her to another man. And so, not only satisfying his own rage but rendering a service to Vittigis as well, he pursued Theodahad with great eagerness and enthusiasm, stopping neither day nor night. [9] He overtook him while still on his way, laid him on his back on the ground, and slew him like a victim for sacrifice. *Dec. 536* Such was the end of Theodahad's life and rule, which had reached the third year.

[10] Vittigis, with the Goths who were present, marched to Rome. When he learned what happened to Theodahad, he was pleased and put his son Theudegisclus under guard. [11] But it seemed to him that the Goths were hardly prepared, and so he thought it better to go first to Ravenna and, after making everything ready there in the best possible way, then to enter the war. He therefore called all the Goths together and spoke as follows:

Vittigis to the Goths

[12] Success in the greatest enterprises, fellow soldiers, generally depends not on critical moments but on careful planning. [13] For often a policy of delay adopted at the opportune moment has been more advantageous, while haste displayed in an untimely way has upset the hope of success for many men. [14] Many who are unprepared, although they fight on equal terms as to their forces, are more easily

490. Homer, *Odyssey* 10.135. Theophrastos, *Enquiry into Plants* 5.8.3, reports local traditions according to which the mountain was once an island but was joined to the mainland through alluviation.

491. In 504–505, Theoderic's armies under Pitzia successfully attacked the Gepids at Sirmium, an action that resulted in conflict between the Goths and the eastern empire. It is possible (though not at all certain) that Prokopios has confused that war with a similar one ca. 530, which Vittigis possibly commanded; see 5.3.15 and note there. Vittigis announced his accession in 536 through Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.31, which stresses his martial qualities.

> conquered than those who enter a struggle with less strength but that are excellently prepared. [15] Let us not, then, be so lifted up by the desire to win momentary honor as to do ourselves irreparable harm, for it is better to suffer shame for a short time in order to gain undying glory than to escape insult for now and so likely be left in obscurity for the rest of time. [16] You doubtless know that the majority of Goths and practically all our equipment of arms is in Gaul, Venetia, and the most distant lands. [17] Moreover, we are carrying on against the nations of the Franks a war that is no less important than this one, and it would be great folly for us to move on to another war without first settling that one satisfactorily. For those who are exposed to attack on two sides and do not focus their attention on a single enemy are likely to be defeated. [18] I say that we must now go straight from here to Ravenna, break off the war with the Franks, and settle our other affairs as well as possible, and then we can fight against Belisarios with the whole army of the Goths. [19] Let no one of you dissemble about this withdrawal, or hesitate to call it flight. [20] For the title of coward, fittingly applied, has saved many, while the reputation for bravery that some men have gained at the wrong time has later led them to defeat. [21] We must look not to the names of things, but to the advantage that comes from actual deeds. And a man's worth is revealed by his deeds, not at their outset, but at their end. [22] Those are not fleeing from the enemy who, when they have improved their preparation, immediately go against them, but those who are so anxious to save their own lives forever that they jump out of the way. Regarding the capture of this city, let no fear come to any of you. [23] For if the Romans are loyal to us, they will guard the city in security for the Goths and they will not experience any hardship, for we will return to them in a short time. [24] But if, on the other hand, they harbor suspicions toward us, they will harm us less by receiving the enemy into the city; for it is better to fight in the open against one's enemies. [25] Nonetheless I will take care that nothing of this sort happens. We will leave behind many men and a most discreet leader, and they will be sufficient to guard Rome so effectively that not only will the situation here be favorable for us, but also no harm may possibly come from this withdrawal of ours.

[26] Thus spoke Vittigis. All the Goths expressed approval and prepared for the march. After this Vittigis exhorted at length Silverius, the priest of the city, and the senate and people of the Romans, reminding them of the rule of Theoderic, and he urged upon them all to be loyal to the nation of the Goths, binding them by the most solemn oaths. He chose out no fewer than four thousand men, and set in command over them Leuderis, an elderly man who had a great reputation for discretion, to guard Rome for the Goths. Then he set out for Ravenna with the rest of the army, keeping most of the senators with him as hostages. [27] When he reached it, he made Matasuntha, the daughter of Amalasuntha, who was a marriageable young woman now, his wedded wife, against her will, in order that he might make his rule more secure by marrying into the family of Theoderic.[492] [28] After this he began to gather all the Goths from every side

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492. A fragment of a nuptial oration for this occasion by Cassiodorus survives.

and to organize and equip them, duly distributing arms and horses to each one. Only the Goths who were on garrison duty in Gaul he was unable to summon, through fear of the Franks. [29] These Franks were called Germans in ancient times. I will now relate the manner in which they first got a foothold in Gaul, where they had lived before that, and how they became hostile to the Goths.

12. As one sails from the Ocean into the Mediterranean at Cadiz, the land on the left, as was stated in a previous book,[493] is named Europe, while the land opposite to this is called Libya and, farther on, Asia. [2] As to the region beyond Libya I am unable to speak with accuracy, for it is almost wholly destitute of men and for this reason the first source of the Nile, which they say flows from that land toward Egypt, is unknown. [3] But Europe is certainly like the Peloponnese from its very beginning, and faces the sea on either side. The first land toward the Ocean and the west is named Spain, extending as far as the Alps in the Pyrenees range. [4] For the people there call a pass through a narrow place "Alps." The land from there as far as the boundaries of Liguria is called Gaul. In that place other Alps separate the Gauls and the Ligurians. [5] Gaul, however, is much broader than Spain and naturally so, because Europe, beginning at a narrow point, gradually widens as one advances until it attains an extraordinary breadth. [6] This land is bounded by water on both sides, being washed on the north by the Ocean and having to the south what is called the Tyrrhenian Sea. [7] In Gaul there flow many rivers, among them the Rhone and the Rhine. But the course of these two is opposite, with one emptying into the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Rhine into the Ocean. [8] There are many lakes in that region, where the Germans lived of old, a barbarian nation that was insignificant in the beginning, who are now called the Franks. [9] Next to them lived the Arborychi,[494] who, with the rest of Gaul and Spain too were in ancient times subjects of the Romans. [10] Beyond them toward the east were settled the Thuringian barbarians, and Augustus, the first emperor, gave them that country. [11] The Burgundians lived not far from them to the south, while the Swabians and Alemanni, powerful nations, lived beyond the Thuringians. All these were settled there as independent peoples in earlier times.

[12] But as time went on, the Visigoths forced their way into the Roman empire and seized all of Spain and the part of Gaul that lies beyond the Rhone river, making them subject and tributary to themselves. [13] It chanced that the Arborychi were then soldiers of the Romans. The Germans, wishing to make them subject to themselves, as their territory adjoined their own and they had changed the regime under which they had lived of old, began to plunder their land and, eager to make war, marched against them with their whole people. [14] The Arborychi proved their valor and loyalty to the Romans and showed themselves brave men in this war. As the Germans were unable to force them, they requested a partnership and to become kin through intermarriage.

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493. 3.1.7.

494. This name, otherwise unattested, cannot refer to Armorica in northwestern France (Brittany), but it may refer to Armorici stationed on the Loire.

[15] The Arborychi were not at all closed to this suggestion, for both people, as it happened, were Christians. Thus they were united into one people and came to have great power. [16] Now other Roman soldiers had also been stationed at the frontiers of Gaul to serve as guards. [17] These soldiers, having no means of returning to Rome and at the same time being unwilling to yield to the enemy, who were Arians, gave themselves, together with their military standards and the land they had long been guarding for the Romans, to the Arborychi and Germans; and they handed down to their offspring and preserved all their ancestral customs, which they revere and cleave to even up to my time. [18] Even today they are clearly recognized as belonging to the legions to which they were assigned when they served in ancient times: they always carry their own standards when they enter battle and always follow the customs of their fathers. [19] They preserve the dress of the Romans in every particular, even as regards their shoes.

[20] Now as long as the Roman polity remained unchanged, the emperor held all
Gaul as far as the Rhone river, but when Odoacer changed it to a tyranny, then, with *476*
the tyrant's permission the Visigoths took possession of all Gaul as far as the Alps that
mark the boundary between Gaul and Liguria.[495] [21] But after the fall of Odoacer, the *493*
Thuringians and Visigoths began to fear the power of the Germans, which was growing greater (for they had become extremely populous and were openly using force against all who got in their way), and so they were eager to win the alliance of the Goths and Theoderic. As Theoderic wished to attach these peoples to himself, he did not refuse to intermarry with them. [22] So he betrothed his own unmarried daughter Theudegotha to Alaric the younger, who was then the ruler of the Visigoths, and gave Amalaberga, the daughter of his sister Amalafrida, to Hermanifrid, the ruler of the Thuringians.[496] [23] As a result, the Franks refrained from violence against those people through fear
of Theoderic, but they began a war against the Burgundians.[497] [24] Later the Franks *500*
and the Goths made an offensive alliance against the Burgundians,[498] agreeing that each
would send an army against them, [25] and, if either army was absent when the other *523*

495. Actually, the Visigoths had been settled in Aquitaine by the Roman authorities in 418 and gradually expanded their control over Spain and Gaul, in an accelerated manner under Euric (r. 466–484). Odoacer recognized these gains.

496. Theoderic had already married Audefleda, Clovis' sister (after 493). His daughter Theudegotha was married to Alaric II (killed by Clovis at the Battle of Vouillé in 507); his daughter Ostrogotho Areagni married Sigismund, son of Gundobad, king of the Burgundians and later king himself; ca. 500 his sister Amalafrida married Thrasamund, the Vandal king (see 3.8.11–13); and in 507 or 511 Amalafrida's daughter Amalaberga (by a prior marriage) married Herminifred, king of the Thuringians. Theoderic's daughter with Audefleda, Amalasuntha, was married to the Spanish Goth Eutharic.

497. Clovis attacked and defeated Gundobad and the Burgundians in 500, but Gundobad returned with Visigothic help in 500/501.

498. The only year in which the Franks and the Ostrogoths under Theoderic both attacked the Burgundians was 523, so Prokopios here jumps ahead in time. In 522, Sigismund killed Sigiric, his son by Theoderic's daughter Ostrogotho Areagni (who had already died). Theoderic sent Tuluin to seize Burgundian land while the Burgundians were being pressed by the Franks. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 3.5–6, typically turns those events into a (unhistorical) dark romance.

attacked and conquered the Burgundians, and gained their land, then the victors would receive a fixed sum of gold as a penalty from those who had not joined in the expedition: only on these terms could the conquered land belong to both people in common. [26] So the Germans went against the Burgundians with a great army according to their agreement with the Goths, but Theoderic was still making his preparations, as he said, and purposely kept putting off the departure of the army to the next day, waiting on events. [27] Finally, however, he sent them but commanded the generals to march slowly and, if they heard that the Franks had been victorious, they were to pick up the pace from then on; but if they learned that adversity had befallen them, they were to proceed no farther, but remain where they were. [28] So they carried out the commands of Theoderic, but meanwhile the Germans joined battle alone with the Burgundians. [29] The battle was fierce and a great slaughter took place on both sides, for the struggle was evenly matched. [30] Finally, the Franks routed the enemy and drove them to the borders of the land that they inhabited at that time, where they had many strongholds, while the Franks took possession of all the rest. [31] The Goths, upon hearing this, were quickly at hand. When they were bitterly reproached by their allies, they blamed the difficulty of the terrain and, paying the amount of the penalty, they divided the land with the victors according to the agreement made. [32] Thus the foresight of Theoderic was revealed more clearly than ever,[499] because, without losing a single one of his subjects, he had with a little gold acquired half the land of his enemy. Thus it was that the Goths and Germans first got possession of a part of Gaul.

[33] But later on, when the power of the Germans grew even greater, they began to think less of Theoderic and the fear he inspired, and took the field against Alaric and the
507 Visigoths. [34] When Alaric learned this, he summoned Theoderic as quickly as possible, and he set out to assist him with a great army.[500] [35] In the meantime, the Visigoths, upon learning that the Germans had encamped near the city of Carcassonne,[501] went to meet them, made camp, and remained quiet. [36] But much time was spent by them in blocking the enemy in this way, and they began to grow irritated. As their land was being plundered by the enemy, they became indignant. [37] At length they heaped many insults upon Alaric, reviling him on account of his fear of the enemy and taunting him with the delay of his father-in-law. [38] For they declared that they by themselves were a match for the enemy in battle and that they would easily overcome the Germans in war even if unaided. [39] Thus Alaric was compelled to do battle with the enemy before the Goths arrived. [40] The Germans, gaining the upper hand in this engagement,

499. Cf. the same phrase about Perikles in Thucydides, *History* 2.65.6.

500. Prokopios is here recounting the end of the Visigothic kingdom of Toulouse. Alaric II and Clovis had settled their differences in 502, but the Franks attacked in 507. Theoderic warned Clovis that he would side with Alaric, to no effect (Cassiodorus, *Variae* 3.4). The Ostrogoths did not mobilize, distracted perhaps by Byzantine ships off their coasts.

501. Actually at Vouillé near Poitiers. The campaign and battle are described in greater detail, but through a thick filter of Frankish and Catholic legend, by Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 2.37.

killed most of the Visigoths and their ruler Alaric. [41] Then they took over the greater part of Gaul and held it; and they laid siege to Carcassonne with great enthusiasm,[502] because they learned that the royal treasure was there, that Alaric the elder in earlier times had taken as booty when he had captured Rome. [42] Among them were also the treasures of Solomon, the king of the Hebrews, a most noteworthy sight. Most were adorned with emeralds, and they had been taken from Jerusalem by the Romans in ancient times.[503] [43] Then the survivors of the Visigoths declared Gesalic, an illegitimate son of Alaric, ruler over them, seeing as Amalaric, the son of Theoderic's daughter, was still a young child.[504] [44] Afterward, when Theoderic had come with the army of the Goths, the Germans became afraid and broke up the siege. [45] They withdrew *508*
from there and took possession of the part of Gaul beyond the Rhone river as far as the Ocean. Theoderic, unable to drive them from there, allowed them to hold this territory, but he himself recovered the rest of Gaul.[505] [46] Then, after Gesalic had been put out of the way,[506] he conferred the rule of the Visigoths upon his grandson Amalaric, for *511*
whom, as he was still a child, he himself acted as regent.[507] [47] Taking all the money that lay in the city of Carcassonne, he went quickly back to Ravenna. But he still sent officers and armies into Gaul and Spain, thus holding the real power of the government himself and, thinking ahead how to make his hold secure and permanent, ordained that the governors of those countries should bring him tribute. [48] He received this every year but, to not give the appearance of being greedy for money, he sent it as an annual gift to the army of the Goths and Visigoths. [49] As a result, the Goths and Visigoths, as time went on, ruled as they were by one man and holding the same land, betrothed their children to one another and thus their two people were joined in kinship.

[50] But afterward, Theudis, a Goth, whom Theoderic had sent as commander of the army, married a woman from Spain, not of the Visigothic people, however, but from the house of one of the wealthy inhabitants of that land. She possessed great wealth and

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502. Actually Toulouse.

503. The spoils of Jerusalem were taken by Titus after the capture of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Alaric I sacked Rome in 410 (see 3.2.14–24). The rest of the Jewish spoils were taken from Rome by Gaizeric in 455 (see 4.9.5). Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 2.37, says that the Franks seized the royal Visigothic treasure at Toulouse in 507, but this is contradicted by what Prokopios says below. It is unknown why Prokopios confuses Toulouse with Carcassonne.

504. Amalaric was the son of Alaric II and Theudegotha, Theoderic's daughter (see 5.12.22). Gesalic (507–511) was soon pushed into Spain by the Burgundians.

505. Taking advantage of Gesalic's weakness and inaction, the Ostrogoths intervened in southern Gaul in 508, pushed out the Franks and Burgundians, and established a province of their own there in 509/510. It is unlikely that Theoderic led his armies in person.

506. Gesalic was defeated and deposed by the general Ibba, sent by Theoderic in 510/511. He continued to cause trouble in North Africa, Spain, and Gaul for years after that until he was captured and executed.

507. Theoderic was effectively considered king of the Visigoths after 511, ruling as regent for his grandson Amalaric (r. 511–531) through the governor Theudis (on whom, see below).

also owned large estates in Spain. [51] From this he raised about two thousand soldiers and surrounded himself with a force of spearmen. While in name he ruled the Goths by Theoderic's permission, he was in fact an out-and-out usurper.[508] [52] Theoderic, who was wise and experienced in the highest degree, was afraid to wage war against his own slave, in case the Franks meanwhile took the field against him, as they naturally would, or in case the Visigoths for their part began a revolt against him. Accordingly, he did not remove Theudis from office but even continued to command him to lead the army whenever it went to war. [53] However, he directed the first men of the Goths to write to Theudis that he would be acting in a way that was just and befitting of his wisdom, if he came to Ravenna and saluted Theoderic. [54] Theudis carried out all the commands of Theoderic and never failed to send the annual tribute, but would not go to Ravenna, nor promise to do so to those who had written him.

13. After Theoderic had departed from the world and there was now no longer any-
532/ one to oppose them, the Franks marched against the Thuringians, killed their ruler
533 Hermanifrid, and reduced to subjection the entire people. [2] But Hermanifrid's wife
took her children and secretly escaped,[509] coming to Theodahad, her brother, who was
then ruler of the Goths. [3] After this the Germans attacked the surviving Burgundians
and defeated them in battle.[510] They confined their leader in one of the fortresses there
and kept him under guard while they reduced the people to subjection and compelled
534 them, as prisoners of war, to march with them from that time on against their enemies.
They made subject and tributary to themselves the whole territory that the Burgundians had previously inhabited. [4] Amalaric, who was ruling the Visigoths, upon coming of age, became thoroughly frightened of the power of the Germans and so took to wife the sister of Theudebert, ruler of the Germans,[511] and divided Gaul with the Goths and his cousin Athalaric. [5] The Goths received the land to the east of the Rhone river, while that to the west fell under the control of the Visigoths.[512] [6] It was agreed that the tribute that Theoderic had imposed would no longer be paid to the Goths, and also Athalaric honestly and justly restored to Amalaric all the money that he had taken from the city of Carcassonne. [7] As these two nations had united with one another by

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508. Theudis governed Spain during the reign of Amalaric (r. 511–531) and then became king himself (r. 531–548) before being assassinated. The phrasing is modeled on Thucydides, *History* 2.65.9, on Perikles.

509. For Amalaberga, see 5.12.22. Her children were a son Amalafrida (see 8.25) and a daughter.

510. The last king of Burgundy was Godomar (r. 524–534), son of Gundobad; he had been fending off Frankish attacks for some time. For a garbled version (that we cannot, unfortunately, correct), see Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 3.6, 3.11.

511. After 526, Amalaric (r. 511–531) married Chrotschildis, the daughter of Clovis; see below for their marriage. Theudebert I (r. 533–547) was not her brother, but her nephew (he was Clovis' grandson). Prokopios has confused him here throughout with his uncle Childebert (r. 511–558).

512. The death of Theoderic (526) dissolved the personal union of the two kingdoms (Visigoths and Ostrogoths, the latter called simply "Goths" by Prokopios here).

intermarriage, they allowed each man who had taken a wife from the other people to choose whether he wished to follow his wife or bring her among his own people. [8] There were many who led their wives to the people they preferred and many also who were led by their wives. [9] But later on Amalaric, falling out with his wife's brother, suffered a great calamity. [10] For while his wife was orthodox, he followed the heresy of Arius and would not allow her to follow her customary norms or perform the rites of religion according to her ancestral tradition; furthermore, he held her in great dishonor because she was unwilling to convert to his norms. The woman was unable to bear this and disclosed the whole matter to her brother. [11] Thus the Germans and the Visigoths went to war with each other. The ensuing battle was fiercely contested for a long time, but finally Amalaric was defeated, losing many of his men, and he himself was slain too.[513] [12] Theudebert took his sister with all the money and as much of Gaul as the Visigoths held as their portion. [13] The survivors of the vanquished emigrated from Gaul with their wives and children and went to Theudis in Spain, who was by then openly a usurper. Thus the Goths and Germans gained possession of Gaul. *531*

[14] But at a later time Theodahad, the ruler of the Goths, learning that Belisarios had come to Sicily, made a treaty with the Germans in which it was agreed that they would have that portion of Gaul that fell to the Goths and receive twenty *kentenaria* of gold, and in return they would assist the Goths in this war. [15] But before he had ratified the agreement he fulfilled his destiny. That is why many of the noblest Goths, with Marcia as their leader, were keeping guard in Gaul. [16] It was these men whom Vittigis was unable to recall from Gaul,[514] indeed he did not think that they were sufficient even to oppose the Franks, who would, in all probability, overrun both Gaul and Italy if he were to march with his whole army against Rome. [17] He therefore called together the leading men among the Goths and spoke as follows: *536*

Vittigis to the leading Goths

> The advice that I wish to give you, fellow countrymen, now that I have brought you together here is not pleasant, but it is necessary. Hear me favorably and deliberate in a manner worthy of our situation. [18] For when events do not go as men plan, it is disadvantageous for them to disregard need or fortune in making arrangements for the present. In all other respects our preparations for war are in the best possible state. [19] But the Franks are an obstacle to us; against them, our ancient enemies, we have been spending both our lives and our money; still, we have succeeded in holding our own up to now, but only because no other hostile force has confronted us. [20] Now that we are compelled to go against another foe, it will be necessary to put an end to the war against them, in the first place because, if they remain hostile to us, they will certainly join Belisarios against us. [21] For those who have the same enemy are by the nature of things led to enter into friendship and alliance with each other. [22] In the second place,

513. The battle between Amalaric and Childebert was fought at Narbo; see the tales told about this by Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 3.10.

514. 5.11.28.

> even if we wage war separately against each army, we will in the end be defeated by both of them. [23] It is better, therefore, for us to accept a little loss and thus preserve the greatest part of our kingdom, than to be destroyed by the enemy in our eagerness to hold everything and lose also our entire hegemony. [24] So my opinion is that if we give the Germans the parts of Gaul that adjoin them, and along with this land all the money that Theodahad agreed to give them, they will not only be turned from their enmity against us but will even lend us assistance in this war. [25] But as to how at a later time, when matters are going well for us, we may regain possession of Gaul, let no one of you consider this. An ancient saying comes to my mind, that we should "settle well the affairs of the present."[515]

[26] Upon hearing this, the notables of the Goths deemed the plan advantageous and wished it to be put into effect. Accordingly, envoys were immediately sent to the nation of the Germans in order to give them the lands of Gaul along with the gold, and to make an offensive and defensive alliance. [27] Now at that time the rulers of the Franks were Childebert, Theudebert, and Clothar. They received Gaul and the money, and divided the land among them according to the territory ruled by each one, and they agreed to be zealous friends of the Goths and to send them auxiliaries secretly, not Franks, however, but from their subject nations. [28] For they were unable to make an alliance with them openly against the Romans because they had a little before agreed to assist the emperor in this war.[516] [29] So the envoys, accomplishing the mission on which they had been sent, returned to Ravenna. Vittigis then summoned Marcia too with his followers.

early Dec. 536

14. While Vittigis was doing this, Belisarios was preparing to go to Rome. He selected three hundred men from the infantry units with Herodianos as their leader, and assigned them to guard Naples. [2] He also sent to Cumae as large a garrison as he thought would be sufficient to guard the fortress there. For there was no stronghold in Campania except those at Cumae and at Naples. [3] It is in this city of Cumae that the inhabitants point out the cave of the Sibyl, where they say her oracular shrine was.[517] Cumae is on the sea, 128 stades distant from Naples. [4] Belisarios, then, was thus putting his army in order, but the inhabitants of Rome, fearing that they might suffer all that had befallen the Neapolitans, decided after considering the matter that it was better to receive the emperor's army into the city. Silverius, the chief priest of the city, more than anyone else urged them to this. [5] So they sent Fidelius, a native of Milan, which is situated in Liguria, a man who was previously an adviser of Athalaric (this official is called *quaestor* by the Romans),[518] and invited Belisarios to come to Rome, promising

515. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 1.35.

516. 5.5.8–10.

517. This allusion may connect Belisarios' arrival in Italy from the east to that of Aeneas, who receives instructions from the Sibyl at Cumae (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6).

518. Fidelis (Fidelius) was Athalaric's *quaestor* in 527–528; he was subsequently appointed praetorian prefect of Italy by Belisarios for 537–538.

to surrender the city without a battle. [6] So Belisarios led his army from Naples by the Latin Way, leaving on the left the Appian Way, which Appius, the consul of the Romans, had made nine hundred years before and to which he had given his name.[519] Now the Appian Way is in length a journey of five days for an active traveler, for it extends from Rome to Capua. [7] The breadth of this road is such that two wagons going in opposite directions can pass one another, and it is one of the most noteworthy sights. [8] For all the stone, which is millstone and hard by nature, Appius quarried in another place far away and brought here. It is not found anywhere in this district. [9] After working these stones until they were smooth and flat, and cutting them to a polygonal shape, he fastened them together without adding concrete or anything else between them.[520] [10] They were fastened together so securely and the joints were so firmly closed, that they give the appearance, when one looks at them, not of being fitted together so much as having *grown* together. [11] After the passage of so long a time, and after being traversed by many wagons and all kinds of animals every day, they have neither separated at all at the joints, nor has any one of the stones been worn out or reduced in thickness, in fact they have not even lost any of their polish. Such, then, is the Appian Way.

[12] As for the Goths keeping guard in Rome, when they learned that the enemy were very near and became aware of the decision of the Romans, they were concerned for the city and, being unable to meet the attacking army in battle, were at a loss. [13] But later, with the Romans' permission, they all departed from there and proceeded to Ravenna, except that Leuderis, their commander, being ashamed, I suppose, because of his present situation, remained there. [14] And it so happened on that day that at the very same time when Belisarios and the emperor's army were entering Rome through the gate they call Asinaria, the Goths were withdrawing from the city through another gate which bears the name Flaminia. So after a space of sixty years Rome again became [subject to the Romans, on the ninth day of the last month, which is called December by the Romans],[521] in the eleventh year of the reign of the emperor Justinian. [15] *9 Dec. 536*
Belisarios sent Leuderis, the commander of the Goths, and the keys of the gates to the emperor, but he himself turned his attention to the circuit-wall, which had crumbled in many places. He constructed each merlon of the battlement with a wing, adding a sort of flanking wall on the left side, in order that those fighting from the battlement against their assailants might not be hit by missiles shot by those storming the wall on their left; and he also dug a deep moat about the wall that was a significant addition. [16] The Romans applauded the forethought of the general and especially the experience displayed in the matter of the battlement, but they marveled greatly and were troubled that he thought it possible for him to enter Rome when he thought that he might be

519. The road was named after Appius Claudius Caecus, who completed one section of it while censor in the late fourth century BC.

520. The description is modeled on the walls of the Peiraieus in Thucydides, *History* 1.93.5. There is debate as to whether Prokopios wrote *chalix* or *chalkos* ("bronze").

521. The missing passage has been added on the basis of Euagrios, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.19.

besieged: the city could not possibly endure a siege because it could not be supplied with provisions, as it was not on the sea, was enclosed by so long a wall, and, above all, lying as it does in a very level plain, is by nature extremely easy of access to assailants. [17] Belisarios heard all this but nevertheless continued to make all his preparations for a siege: the grain that he had in his ships when he came from Sicily he stored in public granaries and kept under guard, and he compelled all the Romans, indignant though they were, to bring all their provisions in from the country.

15. At that time Pitza, a Goth from Samnium, also put himself and all the Goths who were living there with him into the hands of Belisarios, as well as that half of Samnium that lies by the sea, as far as the river that flows through the middle of that district. [2] For the Goths who were settled on the other side of the river were neither willing to follow Pitza nor to be subjects of the emperor. Belisarios gave him a small number of soldiers to help him guard that territory. [3] Before this the Calabrians and Apulians, as no Goths were present in their land, had willingly submitted themselves to Belisarios, both those on the coast and those who held the interior. [4] Among the interior towns is Benevento, which in ancient times the Romans had named Malevento but now they call Benevento,[522] avoiding the evil omen of the former name. *Ventus* means "wind" in Latin. [5] For in Dalmatia, which lies across from this city on the opposite mainland, a harsh and extremely wild wind falls upon the country and, when this begins to blow, it is impossible to find a man there who continues to travel on the road, but all rather shut themselves up at home and wait. [6] Such, indeed, is the force of the wind that it seizes a man on horseback together with his horse and carries him through the air, and then, after whirling him about in the air over a great distance, it throws him down wherever he may chance to be and kills him. [7] It so happens that Benevento, being across from Dalmatia, as I said, and situated on rather high ground, gets some of the disadvantage of this wind. [8] This city was built of old by Diomedes, the son of Tydeus, when he was repulsed from Argos after the capture of Troy. He left to the city as its sign the tusks of the Kalydonian boar, which his uncle Meleagros had received as a prize from the hunt, and they are still there even up to my time, a remarkable sight and well worth seeing, measuring not less than three spans around and having the shape of a crescent.[523] [9] There, too, they say that Diomedes met Aeneas, the son of Anchises, when he was

522. Plinius, *Natural History* 3.11.16.105.

523. In the Trojan War, Diomedes was the leader of men from Argos and Tiryns. His father Tydeus was from Aitolia, and his father in turn was Oineus, king of Kalydon; Meleagros, who killed the Kalydonian Boar, was Tydeus' brother. After the Trojan War, Diomedes was not received at home and went off to Italy; by Roman times, many cities around the Adriatic Sea claimed him as a founder, even Rome itself in one version (Plutarch, *Romulus* 2.2). The emperor Augustus was supposed to have taken the tusks of the Kalydonian boar to Rome from Tegea, where they were possibly seen by Ovid; Pausanias later received an account of them from the keeper of imperial oddities (*Description of Greece* 8.46.1–5). The tusks were probably mammoth fossils, which are found in Italy.

coming from Ilium, and in obedience to the oracle gave him the statue of Athena that he had plundered with Odysseus when the two went into Troy as spies before the city was captured by the Greeks. [10] For they tell the story that when he fell sick at a later time and inquired concerning the disease, the oracle predicted that he would never be freed from his affliction unless he gave this statue to a man of Troy. [11] As for where in the world the statue itself is, the Romans say they do not know, but even up to my time they show a copy of it chiseled in stone in the temple of Fortuna, where it lies before the bronze statue of Athena, which is set up under the open sky in the eastern part of the temple. [12] This stone image shows her as a warrior extending her spear as if for battle, yet she has a chiton reaching to her feet. [13] But the face does not resemble the Greek statues of Athena, but is altogether like the work of the ancient Egyptians.[524] [14] The Byzantines, however, say that the emperor Constantine dug a hole in the forum that bears his name and set this statue in there.[525] So much, then, for this.

[15] In this way Belisarios won over all of Italy on this side of the Adriatic Sea, as far as Rome and Samnium, while the territory on that side of it as far as Liburnia had been gained by Konstantianos, as I said.[526] [16] I will now explain how Italy is divided among the inhabitants of the land. The Ionian Sea sends out a kind of outlet far into the continent and thus forms the Adriatic Sea, but it does not, as in other places where the sea enters the mainland, form an isthmus at its end. [17] For example, the so-called Corinthian Gulf, ending at Lechaion, where the city of Corinth is, forms the Isthmus there, about forty stades in breadth. [18] And the gulf off the Hellespont, which they call the Black Gulf,[527] makes the isthmus at the Chersonese no broader than the Corinthian, but about the same size. [19] But from the city of Ravenna, where the Adriatic Sea ends, to the Tyrrhenian Sea is not less than eight days' journey for an active traveler. [20]

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524. The Palladion was a small image of Athena that was supposed to keep Troy inviolable. To remove its protection, Odysseus and Diomedes stole it by sneaking into Troy. But there were many versions of its history and copies were said to have been made to trick would-be possessors. The Roman version was that Aeneas rescued and brought it to Lavinium, or that Diomedes gave it to him in Italy. The fullest treatment in Greek was Dionysios of Halikarnassos, *Roman Antiquities* 1.67–69, 2.66, an author known by Prokopios. Interestingly, Malalas, *Chronicle* 6.20–24, tells the story of Meleagros, Diomedes, Benevento, Aeneas, and the Palladion (and we must remember that we have an abridged version of Malalas). Still, Prokopios' claim to autopsy in Rome is his own. There were many temples of Fortune in Rome and it is not clear which one Prokopios visited (or which temple was understood in his time to be that of Fortuna). One possibility is the temple of *Fortuna Huiusque Diei* built by Q. Lutatius Catulus in the Campus Martius, to which a statue of Athena brought by Aemilius Paullus was later added (Pliny, *Natural History* 34.54).

525. Malalas, *Chronicle* 13.7, echoed by the *Paschal Chronicle* s.a. 328 (p. 528), says that Constantine removed the Palladion secretly from Rome and placed it under the column in his forum in Constantinople (this is the porphyry "Burned Column"). Other authors claim that Christian relics were placed on top or under the column, e.g., Sokrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.17 (a fragment of the True Cross); later Byzantine texts place a wide range of scriptural relics there.

526. 5.7.36.

527. Modern Saros Bay or Gulf of Saros.

And the reason is that the inlet of the sea, as it advances, always inclines very far to the right. Inside this sea the first town is Dryous, which is now called Otranto. [21] On the right of this are the Calabrians, Apulians, and Samnites, and next to them are the Piceni, who live up to the city of Ravenna. [22] On the other side are the rest of the Calabrians, the Bruttii, and Lucani, beyond whom live the Campanians as far as the city of Terracina, and their territory is adjoined by that of Rome. [23] These peoples hold the shores of the two seas and all the interior of that part of Italy. This is the land called Magna Graecia in former times. For among the Bruttii are the Epizephyrian Locri and the inhabitants of Crotone and Thurii. [24] On the other side of the sea the first inhabitants are Greeks, called Epeirotes, as far as the city of Epidamnos, which is situated on the sea. [25] Next to this is the land of Prekalis,[528] beyond which is Dalmatia, all of which is counted as part of the western empire. Beyond that point is Liburnia, Istria, and the land of the Veneti extending to the city of Ravenna. [26] These territories are situated there by the sea. Above them are the people of Siscia and the Swabians (not the subjects of the Franks, but another group), who hold the interior. [27] Beyond these are settled the Carni and Norici. On their right dwell the Dacians and Pannonians, who hold a number of towns, including Singidunum and Sirmium, and extend as far as the Danube river. [28] Now these peoples north of the Adriatic Sea were ruled by the Goths at the beginning of this war. Beyond the city of Ravenna on the left of the river Po the country was inhabited by Ligurians. [29] To the north of them live the Albani in an extremely good land called Lungavilla, and beyond them are the nations subject to the Franks, while the country to the west is held by the Gauls and after them the Spaniards. [30] On the right of the Po are Emilia and the Tuscan peoples, which extend as far as the boundaries of Rome. So much, then, for this.

early 537

16. So Belisarios took over the entire perimeter of Rome as far as the river Tiber, and strengthened it. When he thought that his preparations were complete, he gave to Konstantinos a large number of his own guardsmen together with many spearmen, including the Massagetai Zarter, Chorsomanos, and Aischmanos, and an army besides, commanding him to go into Tuscany and win over the towns there. [2] He ordered Bessas to take over Narni, a very strong city in Tuscany. Now this Bessas was a Goth by birth, one of those who had long lived in Thrace and had not followed Theoderic when he led the Gothic nation into Italy from there, and he was an energetic and capable warrior. [3] For he was both an excellent general and skillful in combat. Bessas took Narni not at all against the will of the inhabitants, and Konstantinos won over Spoleto and Perugia and some other towns without trouble. [4] For the Tuscans received him into their cities willingly. After establishing a garrison in Spoleto, he himself remained quietly with the rest of the army in Perugia, the first city in Tuscany. [5] When Vittigis heard this, he sent against them an army under Unila and Pissa. [6] Konstantinos confronted them in the outskirts of Perugia and engaged them. The battle was at first

528. This name appears to be otherwise unattested.

evenly disputed as the barbarians were superior in numbers, but then the Romans by their valor gained the upper hand and routed the enemy, and while they were fleeing in complete disorder the Romans killed almost all of them. [7] They captured alive the commanders of the enemy and sent them to Belisarios. When Vittigis heard this, he was no longer willing to remain quietly in Ravenna, where the fact that Marcia and his men had not yet come from Gaul constrained him. [8] So he sent to Dalmatia a large army with Asinarius and Uligisalus as its commanders, in order to recover Dalmatia for the Goths. [9] He directed them to recruit an allied army from the lands of the Swabians and the barbarians there, and then to proceed directly to Dalmatia and Salona. [10] He also sent with them many longships, so that they would be able to besiege Salona both by land and sea. [11] But he himself was hastening to go with his whole army against Belisarios and Rome, leading against him cavalry and infantry to the number of not less than 150,000, most of whom, as well as their horses, were clad in armor.[529]

[12] So Asinarius, upon reaching the country of the Swabians, began to gather the army of the barbarians, while Uligisalus alone led the Goths into Liburnia. [13] When the Romans engaged with them at a place called Scardona, they were defeated in the battle and retired to the city of Burnum; and there Uligisalus awaited his colleague. [14] But Konstantianos, when he heard of the preparations of Asinarius, became afraid for Salona, and summoned the soldiers who were holding all the fortresses in that region. [15] He then dug a moat around the whole circuit-wall and made all the other preparations for the siege in the best manner possible. Asinarius, after gathering an extremely large army of barbarians, came to the city of Burnum. [16] There he joined Uligisalus and the Gothic army and proceeded to Salona. They made a stockade about the circuit-wall and also, filling their ships with soldiers, patrolled the seawalls. Thus they invested Salona both by land and sea. [17] But the Romans suddenly attacked the ships of the enemy and put them to flight, sinking many of them along with their crews and also capturing many empty. [18] But the Goths did not raise the siege; instead, they kept the Romans still more closely confined in the besieged city than before. Such, then, were the fortunes of the Roman and Gothic armies in Dalmatia. [19] But Vittigis, *Feb. 537*
hearing from the natives who came from Rome that the army with Belisarios was very small, began to regret his withdrawal from Rome, and was no longer able to endure the situation; he was now so carried away by fury that he advanced against them. [20] On his way there he met a priest who was coming from Rome; they say that Vittigis in great excitement asked this man whether Belisarios was still in Rome, as he was afraid that he would not be able to catch him, if he forestalled him by running away. But the priest, they say, replied that he need not worry about that: [21] he could guarantee that Belisarios would never resort to flight, but was remaining where he was. Vittigis, they say, hurried then even more than before, praying that he might see the walls of Rome with his own eyes before Belisarios escaped from the city.

529. The number is impossible, one of very few such gross distortions in the *Wars*. But it is the number given by Belisarios in his letter to Justinian; 5.24.3. Were the rhetorical needs of that letter the source of the distortion?

17. Belisarios, when he heard that the Goths were marching against him with their whole force, was in a dilemma. On the one hand, he was unwilling to dispense with the soldiers of Konstantinos and Bessas, especially as his army was extremely small, while, on the other, it seemed to him inexpedient to abandon the strongholds in Tuscany, in case the Goths held them as fortresses against the Romans. [2] After considering the matter he sent word to Konstantinos and Bessas to leave garrisons in the most critical positions there, large enough to guard them, while they and the rest of the army were to come to Rome with all speed. [3] Konstantinos acted accordingly. He set garrisons in Perugia and Spoleto and, with the rest of his soldiers, marched off to Rome. [4] But while Bessas was making his dispositions in Narni in a more leisurely manner, it so happened that, as the enemy were passing that way, the plains in the outskirts of the city were filled with Goths. [5] These were an advance guard preceding the rest of the army. Bessas engaged with them and unexpectedly routed those whom he encountered and killed many. But then, as he was pushed back by their superior numbers, he retired to Narni. [6] Leaving a garrison there according to the instructions of Belisarios, he went with all speed to Rome and reported that the enemy would soon be at hand; for Narni is only 350 stades distant from Rome. [7] Vittigis made no attempt at all to capture Perugia and Spoleto, for these places are extremely strong and he did not want to waste his time there. [8] His sole desire was to find Belisarios not yet fled from Rome. Even when he learned that Narni also was held by the enemy, he was unwilling to attempt anything there, knowing that the place was inaccessible and on steep ground besides, for it is situated on a tall mountain, [9] and the river Narnos[530] flows by the foot of the mountain, which gives the city its name. There are two roads leading up, the one on the east, the other on the west. [10] One is very narrow and made difficult by reason of precipitous rocks, while the other requires use of the bridge that spans the river and provides a passage at that point. [11] This bridge was built by Caesar Augustus in former times and is a noteworthy sight for its arches are the highest of any known to us.

[12] So Vittigis, not waiting to have his time wasted there, departed quickly from there and went with the whole army against Rome, marching through Sabine territory.

Feb. or Mar. 537

[13] When he drew near to Rome and was not more than fourteen stades away from it, he came upon a bridge over the Tiber river.[531] [14] There a little while before Belisarios had built a tower, furnished it with gates, and stationed in it a guard of soldiers, not because this is the only point at which the Tiber could be crossed by the enemy (for there are both boats and bridges at many places along the river), but because he wished the enemy to waste more time in the journey, as he was expecting another army from the emperor, and also so that the Romans could bring in still more supplies. [15] For if the barbarians, repulsed at that point, tried to cross on a bridge somewhere else, he

530. Modern Nera.

531. This was probably the Anio river, a tributary of the Tiber to the north of the city spanned by a number of bridges. The bridge in question was probably the Salarian.

thought that it would take them not less than twenty days, and if they wished to launch boats in the Tiber in sufficient numbers, an even longer time would probably be wasted by them. [16] These, then, were the considerations that led him to establish the garrison at that point. The Goths bivouacked there that day, being at a loss and supposing that they would be obliged to storm the tower on the following day. [17] But twenty-two deserters came to them, men who were barbarians by race but Roman soldiers, from the cavalry units commanded by Innokentios. [18] Just then it occurred to Belisarios to establish a camp near the Tiber river, in order that they might hinder still more the crossing of the enemy and make a display of their daring to their opponents. [19] But all the soldiers who, as has been stated, were keeping guard at the bridge were overcome with terror at the multitude of the Goths and quailed at the magnitude of their danger, so they abandoned the tower they were guarding by night and rushed off in flight. [20] Thinking that they could not enter Rome, they stealthily marched off toward Campania, either because they were afraid of the punishment the general would inflict or because they were ashamed before their comrades.

18. On the following day the Goths destroyed the gates of the tower with no trouble and made the crossing, as no one tried to oppose them. [2] But Belisarios, who had as yet not learned what had happened to the garrison, was bringing up a thousand cavalry to the bridge over the river, to inspect the site and decide where it would be best for his forces to encamp. [3] But when they came closer, they met the enemy already across the river and, against their will, engaged with some of them. The battle was carried on by cavalry on both sides. [4] Then Belisarios, although he was safe before, no longer kept the general's post but began to fight in the front ranks like a soldier. [5] Because of this the cause of the Romans was thrown into great danger, for the whole decision of the war rested with him. [6] But it chanced that the horse he was riding at that time was very experienced in warfare and knew well how to save his rider; his whole body was dark grey, except that his face from the top of his head to the nostrils was the purest white. Such a horse the Greeks call *phalios* and the barbarians *bala*. It so happened that most of the Goths threw their javelins and other missiles at him and at Belisarios for the following reason. [7] Those deserters who on the previous day had come to the Goths, when they saw Belisarios fighting in the front ranks, knowing that if he fell the cause of the Romans would be ruined instantly, cried aloud urging them to "shoot at the *bala*." [8] Consequently this cry was passed around and reached the whole Gothic army, and they did not question it at all, as they were in a great din of fighting, nor did they know clearly that it referred to Belisarios. [9] But conjecturing that it was not by accident that the saying was going around to all, most of them neglected all other targets and began to shoot at Belisarios. [10] Every man among them who laid any claim to valor was immediately possessed with a great eagerness to win honor and, getting as close as possible, they kept trying to lay hold of him and in a great fury kept striking with their spears and swords. [11] But Belisarios himself, turning from side to side, kept killing those who encountered him as they came, and also profited greatly in this

moment of danger by the loyalty of his own spearmen and guardsmen. [12] For they surrounded him and made a display of valor such, I imagine, as has never been shown by any man in the world to this day. [13] Holding out their shields in defense of both the general and his horse, they not only blocked all the missiles but also forced back and beat off those who were constantly assailing him. Thus the whole battle was centered on the body of one man. [14] In this struggle there fell among the Goths no fewer than a thousand, and they were men who fought in the front ranks; and of the household of Belisarios many of the noblest were slain, including Maxentios, the spearman, after making a display of great exploits against the enemy. [15] But by some chance Belisarios was neither wounded nor hit by a missile on that day, although the battle was waged around him alone.

[16] Finally, by their valor the Romans routed the enemy, and a huge multitude of barbarians fled until they reached their main army. There the Gothic infantry, being fresh, withstood the enemy and forced them back without trouble. [17] When another body of cavalry in turn reinforced the Goths, the Romans fled at top speed until they reached a certain hill, which they climbed, and there held their position. But the enemy horsemen were upon them directly, and a second cavalry battle took place. [18] There Valentinos, the groom of Photios, the son of Antonina, made a remarkable exhibition of valor. For by leaping alone into the throng of the enemy he blocked the onrush of the Goths and thus saved his companions. [19] In this way the Romans escaped and arrived at the circuit-walls of Rome. The barbarians in pursuit pressed upon them as far as the wall by the gate that is called Salaria. [20] But the people of Rome, fearing that the enemy might rush in together with the fleeing soldiers and get inside the fortifications, were quite unwilling to open the gates, although Belisarios urged them again and again and called upon them with threats to do so. [21] For, on the one hand, those who peered out of the tower could not recognize the man, for his face and whole head were covered with gore and dust, and also no one was able to see very clearly either; for it was late in the day, about sunset. [22] Nor did the Romans suppose that the general had survived, for those who had come in flight from the previous rout reported that Belisarios had died fighting bravely in the front ranks. [23] So the throng of the enemy, which had poured in fast and possessed great fury, intended to cross the moat immediately and attack the fugitives there. [24] The Romans, finding themselves massed along the wall, but inside the moat, were being crowded into a small space so close together that they touched one another. [25] But those inside the fortifications were without a general, altogether unprepared, and in a panic for themselves and the city; they were unable to defend their own men, even though they were now in so perilous a situation.

[26] Then a daring thought came to Belisarios, which unexpectedly saved the day for the Romans. Urging on all his men, he suddenly fell upon the enemy. [27] Even before this, they had been in great disorder because of the darkness and the fact that they were making a pursuit, so now, when much to their surprise they saw the fugitives attacking them, they supposed that another army had come to their assistance from the city; they were thrown into a great fear and all fled at top speed. [28] Belisarios did not rush out

to pursue them, but returned immediately to the wall. At this the Romans took heart and received him and all his men into the city. [29] So narrowly did Belisarios and the emperor's cause escape peril, and the battle which had begun early in the morning did not end until night. Those who excelled by their valor in this battle were, among the Romans, Belisarios, and among the Goths, Visandus Vandalarius, who had fallen upon Belisarios when the battle around him first broke out and did not stop before he had received thirteen wounds on his body, and fell. [30] He was supposed to have died immediately and so was not cared for by his comrades, although they were victorious, and he lay there with the dead. [31] But on the third day, when the barbarians made camp hard by the circuit-wall of Rome and had sent some men to bury their dead and perform the customary rites of burial, those who were searching out the bodies of the fallen found Visandus Vandalarius with breath still in him, and one of his companions entreated him to say something to him. [32] But he could not do even this, for the inside of his body was on fire because of the lack of food and the thirst caused by his suffering, so he nodded to him to put water into his mouth. When he had drunk and recovered, they lifted and carried him to the camp. [33] So Visandus Vandalarius won a great name for this deed among the Goths and he lived on for a long time, enjoying the greatest renown. This, then, took place on the third day after the battle.

[34] But at that time Belisarios, after reaching safety with his followers, gathered the soldiers and almost the whole Roman populace to the wall and commanded them to light many torches and keep watch throughout the night. Going about the circuit of the fortifications, he set everything in order and placed one of his commanders in charge of each gate. [35] But Bessas, who held the guard at the gate called the Praenestina, sent a messenger to Belisarios with orders to say that the city was held by the enemy, who had broken in through another gate that is across the Tiber river and is named after saint Pancratius.[532] [36] All those who were with Belisarios, upon hearing this, urged him to save himself as quickly as possible through some other gate. But he did not become panic-stricken and declared that the report was false. [37] He sent some horsemen across the Tiber with all speed, and they, after inspecting that place, reported that no hostile attack had been made on the city in that quarter. [38] He therefore sent immediately to each gate and instructed the commanders everywhere that, whenever they heard that the enemy had broken in at some other part of the fortifications, they should not try to assist in the defense nor abandon their post, but should remain quiet; he himself would take care of such matters. [39] He did this so that they would not be thrown into disorder a second time by a false rumor. Vittigis, while the Romans were still in great confusion, sent to the Salaria Gate one of his officers, Wacca by name, a man of no mean station. [40] When he arrived there, he began to reproach the Romans for their faithlessness to the Goths and upbraided them for the treason that, he said, they had committed against both their fatherland and themselves, for they had exchanged the power of the Goths for these Graeci who were not able to defend them,

532. I.e., the Porta Aurelia.

although they had never before seen any of them in Italy except as actors of tragedy, mimes, and thieving sailors. [41] Wacca spoke such words and others like them, but as no one replied to him he returned to the Goths and Vittigis. [42] As for Belisarios, he brought upon himself much ridicule on the part of the Romans, for though he had barely escaped from the enemy, he urged them to take courage and look with contempt upon the barbarians; for he knew well, he said, that he would conquer them decisively. How it was that he had come to know this with certainty I will explain below.[533] [43] At length, when it was well on in the night, Belisarios, who had been fasting up to this point, was with difficulty compelled by his wife and friends who were present to taste a little bread. Thus, then, the two armies passed this night.

19. On the following day they arrayed themselves in the following way, the Goths thinking to capture Rome by siege without any trouble on account of the great size of the city, and the Romans to defend it.[534] The wall of the city has fourteen large gates and several small ones. [2] The Goths, being unable with their entire army to envelop the wall on every side, made six fortified camps from which they harassed a segment of the wall with five gates, from the Flaminia as far as the one called Praenestina; and all these camps were made on the left bank of the Tiber river. [3] The barbarians feared that the enemy, by destroying the bridge that bears the name of Milvius, might cut them off from all the land on the right bank of the river as far as the sea, and in this way free themselves from the slightest experience of the evils of a siege, so they placed a seventh camp across the Tiber in the Plain of Nero,[535] in order that the bridge might be between their two armies. [4] So in this way two other gates came to be exposed to the attacks of the enemy, the Aurelia (now named after Peter, the chief of the Apostles of Christ, for he lies not far from there)[536] and the Gate that is beyond the Tiber.[537] [5] Thus the Goths surrounded only about half of the wall with their army, but as they were in no direction wholly shut off from the wall by the river, they made attacks upon it along its whole length whenever they wished. [6] Now I will tell how the Romans built the city wall on both sides of the river. In ancient times the Tiber used to flow alongside the circuit-wall for a considerable distance. [7] But this ground, on which the wall rises along the stream of the river, is flat and very accessible. [8] Opposite this flat ground, across the Tiber, it happens that there is a great hill where all the mills of the

533. 5.27.25–29.

534. The siege of Rome is modeled in part on the siege of Syracuse by the Athenians in Thucydides' *History*, with echoes of the siege of Plataia as well.

535. This is apparently the first mention of this place-name, designating the plain northwest of the Castel Sant' Angelo (see 6.1.5).

536. Actually, the gate named after St. Peter was probably the old Porta Cornelia, where the road from the Vatican crossed the Tiber; its location is specified at 5.22.12. But it seems to have been called Aurelian too, so Prokopios is not necessarily in error. The old Porta Aurelia he calls the gate of St. Pancratius (5.18.35).

537. Presumably the old Porta Aurelia (St. Pancratius).

city have been built of old,[538] because much water is brought by an aqueduct to the crest of the hill and rushes down from there with great force. [9] For this reason the ancient Romans decided to surround the hill and the riverbank near it with the wall, so that it might never be possible for an enemy to destroy the mills and, crossing the river, carry on operations with ease against the circuit-wall of the city. [10] So they decided to span the river at this point with a bridge and attach it to the wall;[539] and, by building many houses in the district across the river, they caused the stream of the Tiber to be in the middle of the city. So much then for this.

[11] The Goths dug deep trenches around all their camps and heaped up the earth, which they took out from them, on the inner side of the trenches, making this bank extremely high, and they planted great numbers of sharp stakes on the top, thus making all their camps in no way inferior to fortified strongholds. [12] The camp in the Plain of Nero was commanded by Marcia (for he had by now arrived from Gaul with his followers, with whom he was encamped there), and the rest of the camps were commanded by Vittigis with five others; for there was one commander for each camp. [13] So the Goths, having taken their positions in this way, cut open all the aqueducts so that no water at all might enter the city from them. Rome has fourteen aqueducts, which were made of baked brick by the men of old, being of such breadth and height that it is possible for a man on horseback to ride in them. [14] And Belisarios arranged for the defense of the city in the following manner. He himself held the small Pinciana Gate and the gate next to this on the right, which is named Salaria. [15] For at these gates the circuit-wall was assailable, making it also possible for the Romans to go out against the enemy. The Praenestina Gate he gave to Bessas. [16] At the Flaminia, which is on the other side of the Pinciana, he placed Konstantinos, having previously closed the gates and blocked them up most securely by building a wall of great stones on the inside, so that it would be impossible for anyone to open them. [17] As one of the camps was near, he feared that some secret plot against the city might be made there by the enemy. [18] He ordered the commanders of the infantry forces to guard the remaining gates. He closed each of the aqueducts as securely as possible by filling them with masonry to a great depth, in case anyone entered through them from the outside with evil intent.

[19] But after the aqueducts had been cut, as I have stated, the water no longer worked the mills and the Romans were quite unable to operate them with any animals owing to the scarcity of food in a time of siege; indeed, they were barely able to provide for the horses, which were indispensable to them. So Belisarios hit upon the following device. [20] Before the bridge that I just mentioned as being connected with the circuit-wall,[540] he fastened ropes from the two banks of the river and stretched them as tight as he could, and then attached to them two boats side-by-side and two feet apart, precisely where the flow of the water comes down with the greatest force because of

538. I.e., the Janiculum.

539. Presumably the Aurelian bridge (Pons Aurelius or Antoninus) replaced by the Ponte Sisto.

540. 5.19.10.

the arch of the bridge, and, placing two mills on either boat, he hung between them the mechanism by which mills are turned. [21] Beyond these he fastened other boats, each attached to the one next in order, and he set the waterwheels between them in the same way for a great distance. [22] So by the force of the flowing water all the wheels in turn were made to revolve independently, and thus activated the mills with which they were connected and ground sufficient flour for the city. When the enemy learned this from deserters, they destroyed the wheels in the following manner. [23] They gathered large trees and the bodies of Romans newly slain and kept throwing them into the river. [24] Most of these were carried with the current between the boats and broke off the mill wheels. But Belisarios, observing what was being done, contrived the following device against it. [25] He fastened above the bridge long iron chains, which reached completely across the Tiber. All the objects that the river brought down struck upon these chains, gathered there, and went no farther. [26] Then, men to whom this task was assigned kept pulling these objects out and brought them to land. Belisarios did this, not so much on account of the mills, as because he began to think with alarm that the enemy might get quietly inside the bridge at this point with many boats and reach the middle of the city. [27] Thus the barbarians abandoned the attempt, as they met with no success in it. Thereafter the Romans continued to use these mills, but they were entirely prevented from using the baths because of the scarcity of water. [28] However, they had sufficient water to drink, as even for those who lived far from the river it was possible to draw water from wells. [29] But as for the sewers, which carry out from the city whatever is unclean, he was not forced to devise any plan of safety, for they all discharge into the Tiber river, and therefore it was impossible for any plot to be made against the city by the enemy in connection with them.

20. Those were the arrangements made by Belisarios for the siege. Now many children of the Samnites, who were pasturing flocks in their own country, chose out two among them who were strong of body and, calling one by the name of Belisarios and naming the other Vittigis, had them wrestle. [2] They entered the struggle with great vehemence and it happened that the one impersonating Vittigis was thrown. Then the crowd of boys hung him to a tree in play. [3] But by chance a wolf appeared there, whereupon the boys all fled and "Vittigis," who was suspended from the tree, remained for some time in this punishment and died. [4] When this became known to the Samnites, they did not inflict any punishment upon these children but, divining the meaning of the incident, declared that Belisarios would conquer decisively. So much, then, for this.

[5] But the populace of Rome were entirely unacquainted with the evils of war and siege. When they began to be distressed by their inability to bathe and the scarcity of provisions, and were obliged to forgo sleep in order to guard the circuit-wall, and also suspected that the city would be captured soon; and when, at the same time, they saw the enemy plundering their fields and other possessions, they were dissatisfied and indignant that they, who had done no wrong, were being besieged and exposed to such a great peril. [6] Gathering in groups among themselves, they railed openly against

Belisarios on the ground that he had dared to take the field against the Goths without receiving an adequate force from the emperor. [7] These reproaches against Belisarios were secretly indulged in also by the members of the council that they call the senate. Vittigis heard all this from deserters and, desiring to make them clash with each other still more, thinking that in this way the affairs of the Romans would be thrown into great confusion, he sent envoys to Belisarios, among whom was Albis. [8] When they came before Belisarios, they spoke as follows in the presence of the Roman senators and all the officers of the army:

Albis to Belisarios

> Long ago, O general, mankind has made true and proper distinctions among the names of things. One of these distinctions is this, that rashness is different from bravery. [9] When the former takes possession of a man it brings him into danger with dishonor, but the latter adequately brings him a reputation for valor. [10] One of these two has brought you against us, but which one it is you will immediately make clear. For if, on the one hand, you placed your confidence in bravery when you took the field against the Goths, there is ample opportunity, good sir, for you to do the deeds of a brave man, as you can see the army of the enemy from your wall. But if, on the other hand, you came to attack us because you were possessed by audacity, certainly you now regret the thoughtless undertaking. [11] For the opinions of those who have made a desperate venture tend to change when they find themselves in serious straits. Now, then, do not cause the sufferings of these Romans to be prolonged any further, people whom Theoderic fostered in a life of soft luxury and freedom, and stop resisting him who is the master of both Goths and Italians. [12] Is it not absurd that you should sit in Rome hemmed in as you are and in abject terror of the enemy, while the king of this city is in a fortified camp inflicting the evils of war upon his own subjects? [13] We will give you and your men an opportunity to depart immediately in security, retaining all your possessions. For we deem it neither holy nor worthy of humane manners to press hard upon those who have converted to prudence. [14] Also, we would gladly ask these Romans what complaints they could have had against the Goths that they betrayed both us and themselves, seeing that up to this time they have enjoyed our kindness, and now are acquainted by experience with the assistance to be expected from you.

[15] That is what the envoys said. Belisarios replied as follows:

Belisarios to Albis

> It is not up to you to decide when we will have our battle. Men do not wage war according to the opinion of their enemies, but the custom is that each one arranges his own affairs for himself, however he thinks is best. [16] But I say to you that a time will come when you will want to hide your heads under the thorns, but will be unable.[541] [17] As for Rome, in capturing it we hold nothing that belongs to others; it was you who trespassed upon it in former times, although it did not belong to you at all, and now you have given it back, however

541. I have been unable to identify this expression.

unwillingly, to its former owners. [18] Whoever of you has hopes of setting foot in Rome without a fight is mistaken in his judgment. For as long as Belisarios lives, it is impossible for him to relinquish this city.

Such were the words of Belisarios. [19] The Romans, being overcome by a great fear, sat in silence and dared to make no reply to the envoys even though they were abused by them at length for treason to the Goths, except, indeed, that Fidelius saw fit to taunt them. [20] This man had been appointed to the office of praetorian prefect by Belisarios, and for this he seemed above all others to be loyal toward the emperor.

21. So the envoys returned to their own army. When Vittigis asked them what kind of man Belisarios was and where he stood with regard to withdrawing from Rome, they replied that the Goths were hoping for unlikely things if they supposed that they would *Mar. 536* frighten Belisarios. [2] When Vittigis heard this, he began to plan an assault on the wall in earnest, and the preparations he made for the attempt upon the fortifications were as follows. [3] He made wooden towers equal in height to the enemy's walls, and he hit on their true height by making many calculations based upon the courses of the stone.[542] [4] Wheels were attached to the base of these towers under each corner, which were intended, as they turned, to move the towers to any point the attacking army wished at a given time, and the towers were drawn by oxen yoked together. [5] After this he prepared many ladders that would reach up to the parapet and four engines called rams. [6] This engine is of the following sort. Four upright wooden beams, equal in length, are set up opposite one another. To these beams they fit eight horizontal timbers, four above and an equal number at the base, binding them together. [7] After they have made the frame of a four-sided building, they surround it on all sides not with walls but with a covering of hides, in order that the engine may be light for those who pull it and that those within may be safe from being shot by their opponents. [8] On the inside they hang another horizontal beam from the top by means of chains that swing free, and they keep it at about the middle of the interior. They then sharpen the end of this beam and cover it with a large iron head, precisely as they cover the point of an arrow, or they sometimes make the iron head square like an anvil. [9] And the whole structure is raised upon four wheels, one being attached to each upright beam, and no fewer than fifty men move it from inside. [10] When they bring it up to the wall, they draw back the beam that I just mentioned by turning a mechanism, and then they let it swing forward with great momentum against the wall. [11] This beam by frequent blows is able quite easily to batter down and tear open a wall wherever it strikes, and that is where the engine gets its name, because the striking end of the beam, projecting as it does, butts against whatever it may encounter, as do male sheep. [12] Such, then, are the rams used by the assailants of a wall.

[13] The Goths were also holding in readiness a vast amount of kindle-wood, consisting of wood and reeds, in order that by throwing them into the moat they might

542. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 3.20, for the expression in a similar context.

make the ground level and their engines might not be prevented from crossing it. After the Goths made their preparations in this manner, they were eager to assault the wall. [14] But Belisarios placed upon the towers engines that they call *ballistae*. Now these engines have the form of a bow but on the underside of them a grooved wooden shaft projects, which is loosely attached and rests upon an iron rod. [15] So when men wish to shoot at the enemy with it, they make the parts of the bow, which form the ends, bend toward one another by means of a short rope fastened to them, and they place in the grooved shaft the arrow, which is about one-half the length of the ordinary arrows that they shoot from bows, but about four times as thick. [16] However, it does not have feathers of the usual sort attached to it but, by inserting thin pieces of wood in place of feathers, they give it in all respects the form of an arrow, making the point which they put on very large and proportionate to its thickness. [17] The men who stand on either side wind it up tight by means of certain devices, and then the grooved shaft shoots forward and stops, but the missile is discharged from the shaft with such force that it attains the distance of not less than two bow shots; when it hits a tree or rock, it pierces it easily. [18] Such is the engine that bears this name, being so called because it shoots with great force.[543] And they fixed other engines along the parapet of the wall adapted for throwing stones. [19] These resemble slings and are called "onagers." Outside the gates they placed "wolves," which they make in the following manner. [20] They set up two beams that reach from the ground up to the battlements; then they fit together planks that have been mortised to one another, placing some upright and others crosswise, so that the spaces between the intersections appear as a succession of holes. [21] And from every joint there projects a kind of beak, which resembles closely a thick goad. Then they fasten the crossbeams to the two upright timbers, beginning at the top and letting them extend halfway down, and then lean the timbers back against the gates. [22] Whenever the enemy come near them, those above lay hold of the ends of the timbers and push. Falling suddenly upon the assailants, they easily kill with the projecting beaks as many men as they may catch. That was what Belisarios was doing.

22. On the eighteenth day of the siege the Goths moved against the fortifications at about sunrise to assault the wall, with Vittigis leading them, and all the Romans were stunned at the sight of the advancing towers and rams, with which they were entirely unfamiliar. [2] But Belisarios, seeing the ranks of the enemy as they advanced with the engines, began to laugh and commanded the soldiers to remain quiet and not to begin fighting until he himself gave the signal. Now he did not right then reveal the reason why he laughed, but it became known later. [3] The Romans, however, suspecting that he was being ironic, abused him, called him shameless, and were indignant that he did not try to check the enemy as they advanced. [4] But when the Goths came near the moat, the general was the first to stretch his bow and managed to hit in the neck and kill one of the men in armor who were leading the army. [5] He fell on his back mortally

543. I.e., from Greek *ballô* + *malista*.

wounded, while the whole Roman army raised a powerful shout such as was never heard before, thinking that they had received an excellent omen. [6] And twice did Belisarios shoot his arrow, and the very same thing happened again a second time. The shouting rose still louder from the circuit-wall and the Romans thought that the enemy were conquered already. [7] Then Belisarios gave the signal for the whole army to put their bows into action, but those near himself he commanded to shoot only at the oxen. [8] And all the oxen fell immediately, so that the enemy could neither move the towers further nor in their perplexity contrive anything as the fighting was in progress. [9] In this way the forethought of Belisarios in not trying to halt the enemy while they were still far away came to be understood,[544] as well as the reason why he had laughed at the simplicity of the barbarians, who had been so thoughtless as to hope to bring oxen up to the enemy wall. Now all this took place at the Salaria Gate. [10] Vittigis, repulsed at this point, left there a large force of Goths, arraying them a deep phalanx and ordering the commanders not to make an assault on the fortifications but to remain in formation and shoot rapidly at the parapet so as to give Belisarios no opportunity to bring help to any other part of the wall that he himself might attack with a superior force; he then went to the Praenestina Gate with a great force, to a part of the walls that the Romans call the Vivarium, where the wall was most assailable.[545] [11] Now it so happened that engines of war were already there, including towers, rams, and many ladders.

[12] But in the meantime another Gothic assault was being made at the Aurelia Gate[546] in the following way. The tomb of the Roman emperor Hadrian stands outside the Aurelia Gate, about a stone's throw distant from the walls, a very noteworthy sight. [13] It is made of Parian marble and the stones fit closely to each other, having almost no seam between them. It has four sides that are all equal, each being about a stone's throw in length, while their height exceeds that of the city wall. [14] Above there are statues of the same marble, representing men and horses, wonderfully made. But as this tomb seemed to the men of ancient times a fortress to be used against the city, they enclosed it by two walls that extend to it from the circuit-wall, and thus made it a part of the wall. [15] Indeed, it gives the appearance of a high tower built as a bulwark at the gate there. So the fortifications at that point were most adequate. Now it happened that Belisarios had appointed Konstantinos to take charge of the garrison there. [16] He had instructed him to attend also to the guarding of the adjoining wall, which had a small and inconsiderable garrison. That part of the circuit-wall was the least assailable of all, because the river flows along it, and he supposed that no attack would come from there and so stationed an insignificant garrison at that place. Given that the soldiers he had were few, he assigned the majority to the positions where there was most need of them. [17] For the emperor's army in Rome at the beginning of this siege amounted at most to only five thousand men. [18] But it was reported to Konstantinos that the enemy were

544. Cf. Perikles in Thucydides, *History* 2.65.6.

545. The name is explained at 5.23.16–17.

546. See 5.19.4 and note there.

attempting to cross the Tiber, he became fearful for that part of the fortifications and went there himself with all speed, accompanied by a few men, to lend assistance, but he commanded the greater part of his men to guard the gate and tomb. [19] Meanwhile the Goths began an assault upon the Aurelia Gate and the tower of Hadrian and, although they had no engines of war, they brought up many ladders and thought that by shooting a vast number of arrows they would easily reduce the enemy to helplessness and so overpower the garrison there without any trouble on account of its small size. [20] As they advanced, they held before them shields no smaller than those of the Persians, and they succeeded in getting very close to their opponents without being perceived. [21] For they came hidden under the colonnade that extends to the church of the Apostle Peter. They suddenly appeared from there and began the attack, so that the guards were neither able to use the so-called ballista (for these engines do not send their arrows except straight out), nor indeed could they ward off their assailants with arrows, as the situation was against them because of the shields. [22] But the Goths kept pressing fiercely upon them, shooting many missiles at the battlements and they were already about to set their ladders against the wall, having practically surrounded those who were fighting from the tomb; for whenever the Goths advanced they always got in the rear of the Romans on the sides. For a short time the Romans were in shock and they seemed to have no hope of somehow defending and saving themselves, but afterward by common agreement they broke in pieces most of the statues, which were very large, and, taking up great numbers of stones, threw them with both hands upon the heads of the enemy, who gave way before these missiles. [23] As they retreated a little, the Romans, having by now the advantage, took heart and with a loud shout began to drive back their assailants by using their bows and hurling stones at them. [24] Putting their hands to the engines, they reduced their opponents to great fear and their assault was quickly ended. [25] By this time Konstantinos also had come up, having frightened off those who had tried the river and easily driven them off, because they did not find the wall there entirely unguarded, as they had supposed they would. Thus safety was restored at the Aurelia Gate.

23. A force of the enemy came to the gate beyond the Tiber river, which is called the Pancratian, but accomplished nothing worth mentioning because of the strength of the place; for the fortifications of the city at this point are on a steep elevation and not favorably situated for assaults. [2] Paulos was keeping guard there with an infantry unit that he commanded in person. Likewise they made no attempt on the Flaminia Gate, because it is situated on a precipitous slope that is not at all accessible. [3] The *regii*, an infantry unit,[547] were keeping guard there with Oursikinos, who commanded them. Between this gate and the small gate next on the right, which is called Pinciana, a certain portion of the wall had split open of its own accord in ancient times, not clear to the ground, however, but about halfway down, yet still it had not fallen or suffered further damage,

547. They were an *auxilium palatinum* previously under one of the two *magistri militum praesentalis*.

although it leaned so to either side that one part of it appeared outside the rest of the wall and the other inside. [4] Because of this the Romans from ancient times have called the place Broken Wall in their own tongue. [5] When Belisarios in the beginning undertook to tear down this portion and rebuild it, the Romans prevented him, declaring that the Apostle Peter had promised them that he would care for the guarding of the wall there. This apostle is revered by the Romans and held in awe above all others. [6] And the outcome at this place was in all respects what the Romans believed and expected. For neither on that day nor throughout the whole time during which the Goths were besieging Rome did any hostile force come to that place, nor did any disturbance occur there. [7] We marveled that it never occurred to us nor to the enemy to remember this portion of the fortifications during the whole time, either while they were making their assaults or planning attacks against the wall by night, although many such attempts were made. [8] It was for this reason, in fact, that no one dared to rebuild it at a later time also, but up to the present day the wall there is split open in this way. So much, then, for this.

[9] At the Salaria Gate a tall Goth who was a capable warrior, wearing a breastplate and with a helmet on his head, a man who was distinguished in the Gothic nation, refused to remain in the ranks with the others but stood by a tree and kept shooting at the parapet. [10] By some chance this man was hit by a ballista that was on a tower at his left. [11] Passing through the breastplate and the body of the man, the arrow sank more than half its length into the tree and, pinning him to the spot where it entered the tree, it suspended his corpse there. [12] When this was seen by the Goths they were terrified; they got outside the range of the arrows, still in formation, but they no longer harassed those on the wall.

[13] But Bessas and Peranios summoned Belisarios, as Vittigis was pressing most vigorously upon them at the Vivarium. Belisarios was fearful concerning the wall there (for it was most assailable at that point, as was said),[548] and so came to the rescue himself with all speed, leaving one of his companions at the Salaria. [14] Finding that the soldiers in the Vivarium feared the attack of the enemy, which was being made by a vigorous multitude, he exhorted them to look with contempt upon the enemy and so restored their confidence. [15] Now the ground there was level and consequently open to the attacks of the assailants. By some chance the wall at that point had crumbled to such an extent that the binding of the bricks did not hold together very well. [16] The ancient Romans had built another short wall outside of it and encircling it, not for the sake of safety (for it was neither strengthened with towers, nor indeed was there any battlement built upon it, nor any other means by which it would have been possible to repulse an enemy assault upon the walls), but rather for the sake of an unseemly kind of luxury, namely, that they might confine and keep there lions and other wild animals. [17] That is why this place was named the Vivarium, for thus the Romans call a place where untamed animals are cared for. So Vittigis was preparing various engines at different places along the wall and commanded the Goths to mine the outside wall, thinking

548. 5.22.10.

that, if they got inside that, they would have no trouble in capturing the main wall, which he knew to be weak. [18] But Belisarios, seeing that the enemy was undermining the Vivarium and assaulting the fortifications at many places, neither allowed the soldiers to defend the wall nor to remain at the battlement, except a very few, although he had with him the pick of the army. [19] He held them all in readiness below about the gates, armored and carrying only swords in their hands. When the Goths made a breach in the wall and got inside the Vivarium, he quickly sent Kyprianos with some others into the enclosure against them, commanding them to set to work. [20] And they slew all who had broken in, for they put up no defense and at the same time were being destroyed by one another in the cramped space about the exit. [21] The enemy were thrown into dismay by the sudden turn of events and were not in formation, but were rushing individually every which way. Belisarios suddenly opened the gates of the circuit-wall and sent his entire army against his opponents. [22] The Goths had no intention of resisting, but rushed off in flight, in any way each one could, while the Romans followed and had no difficulty in killing all whom they met. The pursuit proved a long one as the Goths, in assaulting the wall there, were far from their own camps. [23] Then Belisarios gave the order to burn the enemy's engines, and the flames, rising to a great height, naturally increased the shock of the men in flight.

[24] Meanwhile it chanced that the same thing happened at the Salaria Gate. For they suddenly opened the gates, fell unexpectedly upon the barbarians, who offered no resistance, turned their backs, and were slain; and they burned the engines of war within their reach. [25] The flames at many parts of the wall rose to a great height, and the Goths were already being forced to withdraw from the whole circuit-wall. The shouting on both sides was extremely loud, as the men on the wall urged on those who were in pursuit while those in the camps lamented the overwhelming calamity they had suffered. [26] Among the Goths there perished that day thirty thousand, as their leaders claimed, and more were wounded; for as they were massed in great numbers, those fighting from the battlement usually hit somebody when they shot at them, while those who made the sallies destroyed an extraordinary number of terrified and fleeing men. [27] The fighting at the wall, which began early in the morning, did not end until late in the afternoon. During that night, then, both armies bivouacked where they were, the Romans singing the song of victory on the fortifications and lauding Belisarios to the skies, having with them the spoils stripped from the fallen, while the Goths cared for their wounded and bewailed their dead.

24. Belisarios then wrote a letter to the emperor, and it said the following:[549]

Belisarios to Justinian

> We have arrived in Italy, as you commanded, and we have acquired much of its territory and hold Rome also, after expelling the barbarians in it, whose leader, Leuderis, I have recently sent to you. [2] But as we have stationed a great

549. This letter is closely based on, and reverses, the letter sent by Nikias to the Athenians during the siege of Syracuse in Thucydides, *History* 7.10–15.

number of soldiers in both Sicily and Italy to guard the strongholds which we prevailed in capturing, our army has in consequence been reduced to only five thousand. [3] But the enemy have come against us, gathered together to the number of 150,000. When we first went out to spy upon their men along the Tiber river and were compelled, contrary to our intention, to engage with them, we came close to being buried under their multitude of spears. [4] After this, when the barbarians attacked the wall with their whole army and assaulted the fortifications at every point with various engines of war, they again came close to capturing both us and the city at the first charge, and would have succeeded had not some chance snatched us from ruin. [5] For outcomes that surpass the nature of things should not properly be ascribed to human virtue but to a Higher Power. [6] Now all that has been achieved by us so far, whether due to chance or virtue, is for the best; but as to our prospects from now on, I could wish better things for your cause. [7] However, I will never hide from you anything that it is my duty to say and yours to do, knowing that, while human affairs follow whatever course is set by God's will, those who are in charge of any enterprise always win praise or blame according to their own deeds. [8] Therefore let both arms and soldiers be sent to us in such numbers that from now on we may engage with the enemy in this war with an equality of strength. [9] For one should not entrust everything to chance, as chance tends not to follow the same course forever. As for you, emperor, take this thought to heart, that if at this time the barbarians prevail over us, we will be expelled from Italy, which is yours, and we will lose the army in addition, and besides all this we will have a great shame stemming from our conduct. [10] I refrain from saying that we should also be regarded as having ruined the Romans, men who have valued their safety less than their loyalty to your rule. [11] Consequently, the result for us will be that the successes we have won so far will in the end prove to have been but a prelude to disasters. [12] For if it had so happened that we had been repulsed from Rome and Campania or, at a much earlier time, from Sicily, we would be feeling the sting only of the lightest of all misfortunes, namely of being unable to grow wealthy on the possessions of others. [13] Again, this too is worthy of consideration by you, that it has never been possible even for many times ten thousand men to guard Rome for any considerable length of time, as the city embraces a large territory and, because it is not on the sea, is shut off from all supplies. [14] Although the Romans are well disposed toward us now, when their troubles are prolonged, as is likely to happen, they will not hesitate to choose the course that is in their own interests. [15] For when men have entered into friendship with others on the spur of the moment, they tend to keep faith with them not in adversity but while they prosper. [16] Besides, the Romans will be compelled by hunger to do many things they would prefer not to do. [17] As for me, I know I am bound even to die for your sake, and for this reason no man will ever be able to expel me from this city while I live; but consider what kind of a reputation such an end for Belisarios would bring to you.

[18] Such was the letter written by Belisarios. The emperor, greatly distressed, began in haste to gather an army and ships, and sent orders to the soldiers of Valerianos and

Martinos to advance with all speed. [19] For they happened to have been sent with another army at about the winter solstice,[550] with instructions to sail to Italy. [20] But they had sailed as far as Greece and, as they were unable to force their way any farther, were passing the winter in the regions of Aitolia and Akarnania. [21] The emperor Justinian sent word of all this to Belisarios and thereby strengthened him and all the Romans in their zeal.

[22] At this time it so happened that the following event took place in Naples. There was in the marketplace an image of Theoderic, the ruler of the Goths, made of mosaic stones that were extremely small and tinted with nearly every color. [23] At one time during the life of Theoderic it happened that the head in this image broke apart, the arrangement of the stones being spontaneously disrupted, and it came to pass that Theoderic then immediately finished his life. [24] Eight years later the stones forming the belly of the picture fell apart suddenly, and Athalaric, the grandson of Theoderic, immediately died. [25] After the passage of a short time, the stones about the genitals fell to the ground, and Amalasuntha, the child of Theoderic, passed from the world. Now these things had already happened as described. [26] But when the Goths began the siege of Rome, as chance would have it the part of the image from the thighs to the tips of the feet were ruined, [27] and so the whole image disappeared from the wall. The Romans understood this incident and maintained that the emperor's army would prevail in the war, thinking that the feet of Theoderic were nothing else than the Gothic people whom he ruled, and, in consequence, they became still more hopeful. [28] In Rome, moreover, some of the patricians brought out the Sibylline oracles, declaring that the danger for the city would last only until the month of July.[551] [29] It was fated that someone would then be appointed emperor over the Romans and from then on Rome would no longer have any Getic peril to fear; [30] for they say that the Goths are a Getic race.[552] The oracle was as follows: "In the month of Quintilis . . . as king nothing Getic longer. . . ."[553] [31] They declared that the "fifth month" was July, some because the siege began at the beginning of March, from which July is the fifth month, others because March was considered the first month until the reign of Numa, as the

550. I.e., at the end of December 536.

551. Since ancient times, the Roman state alternately collected and publically burned the prophecies of the Sibyl; the last time they had been destroyed was by Stilicho in 407/408 (they were kept in the temple of Capitoline Jupiter). The texts circulating in late antiquity under this name were mostly Jewish in origin and had been heavily edited and enhanced by Christian forgers. Prokopios' contemporary Ioannes Lydos took a more favorable view of them in his book *On the Months*. Prokopios is here likely responding to men like him. The collection we have today was put together probably in the sixth century.

552. In the classical period the Getai were a Thracian tribe on the lower Danube. They were unrelated to the Goths, who later occupied their former territories. Some late antique authors conflated the two, whose names and locations were similar. Prokopios' exact contemporary Jordanes, himself of Gothic descent, was writing in Constantinople a history of the Goths called the *Getica*.

553. The text is too corrupt to read at this point.

full Roman year before that time contained ten months and July for this reason had the name Quintilis.[554] But none of these predictions were true. [32] For neither was an emperor appointed over the Romans at that time, nor was the siege destined to be broken up until a year later, and Rome was again to come into similar perils in the reign of Totila, ruler of the Goths, as will be told by me in the later books.[555] [33] It seems to me that the oracle did not indicate this attack by the barbarians, but some other one that has either happened already or will come at a later time. [34] In my opinion, it is impossible for anyone to grasp the meaning of the Sibyl's oracles before the fact. [35] I will explain the reason for this, having read all the oracles in question. The Sibyl does not mention all events and in order, nor does she produce a coherent account, but after uttering a verse about the troubles in Libya she leaps immediately to the land of Persia, [36] then proceeds to mention the Romans and transfers the narrative to the Assyrians. And again, while uttering prophecies about the Romans, she foretells the misfortunes of the Britons. [37] For this reason it is impossible for any man whosoever to understand the oracles of the Sibyl before the event, and it is only time itself, after the event has come to pass and the words can be tested by the facts, that can become an accurate interpreter of her sayings. But as for these things, let each one reason as he wishes.[556] I now return to the point from which I digressed.

25. When the Goths had been repulsed in the fight at the wall, each army bivouacked that night in the manner described.[557] [2] On the following day Belisarios commanded all the Romans to transport their women and children to Naples along with as many of their domestic servants as they thought would not be needed by them to guard the walls, in case they created a scarcity of provisions. [3] He ordered the soldiers to do the same, if anyone had a male or female attendant. For, he said, he was no longer able while besieged to provide them with food to the customary amount, but they would have to accept half their daily ration in actual supplies and the remainder in silver. [4] So they carried out his instructions. Immediately a great throng set out for Campania. Now some chanced upon the boats that were lying at anchor in the harbor of Rome and thus secured passage, but the rest went on foot by the road which is called the Appian Way. [5] And no danger or fear came from the besiegers to disturb either those who traveled this way on foot or those who set out from the harbor. [6] For, on the one hand, the enemy were unable to surround the whole of Rome with their camps on account of the great size of the city and, on the other, they did not dare to be found far from the camps in small companies, fearing the sallies of their opponents. [7] For some time,

554. Quintilis was renamed July in honor of Julius Caesar and Sextilis was renamed in honor of Augustus.

555. 7.20.

556. Cf. the comments of Thucydides, *History* 2.54, on the way memory adjusts to experience, as well as the expression in ibid., 2.48.3.

557. 5.23.27.

then, the besieged had ample opportunity to move out of the city and bring provisions into it from outside. [8] Especially at night the barbarians were always in great fear, so they posted guards and remained quietly in their camps. [9] For bands were continually issuing from the city, especially Moors in great numbers, and whenever they found the enemy either asleep or walking in small companies (as tends to happen often in a large army, the men going out not only to attend to the needs of nature but to pasture horses and mules and such animals as are suitable for food) they would kill them and swiftly strip them; if it chanced that a larger number of the enemy fell upon them, they would withdraw on the run, being men swift of foot by nature, lightly equipped, and always outpacing their pursuers in flight. [10] Consequently, the great majority were able to depart from Rome, and some went to Campania, some to Sicily, and others wherever they thought it was easier or better to go. [11] But Belisarios saw that the number of soldiers at his command was by no means sufficient for the whole circuit of the wall, for they were few, as I have previously stated,[558] and the same men could not keep guard constantly without sleeping, but some would understandably be sleeping while others were stationed on guard. At the same time he saw that the greatest part of the populace were hard-pressed by poverty and lacking the necessities of life, for they were men who worked with their hands and made their living from day to day; as they were forced to be idle on account of the siege, they had no means of procuring sustenance. So he mixed soldiers and civilians together and distributed them to each post, appointing a fixed daily wage for the civilians. [12] In this way companies were formed sufficient for guarding the wall, and each company was assigned to guard the walls on a specified night, so all of them guarded them in turn. In this way Belisarios solved the problems of both soldiers and civilians.

[13] But a suspicion arose against Silverius, the chief priest of the city, that he was *late Mar. 537* engaged in treasonable negotiations with the Goths, so Belisarios immediately sent him to Greece and a little later appointed another chief priest, Vigilius by name.[559] [14] He banished some of the senators from Rome on the same charge but later, when the enemy had abandoned the siege and withdrawn, he restored them to their previous position. [15] Among these was Maximus, whose ancestor Maximus had committed

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558. 5.17.1.

559. At *Secret History* 1.14, Prokopios claims that Belisarios' wife, Antonina, got rid of Silverius to please Theodora. Prokopios promises there to give a full account in a later book, but he never does, so this is probably a reference to his unwritten *Ecclesiastical History*. According to the *Book of Pontiffs*, Theodora hated Silverius because he refused to restore the bishop of Constantinople Anthimos, who had been deposed for heresy by pope Agapetus at a council in Constantinople in 536. She instructed Belisarios to find some pretext on which to depose him and replace him with the deacon Vigilius, whom she sent along. The pretext was that Silverius was in communication with the Goths during the siege of Rome. Liberatus, *Breviarium* 22, claims that a letter from Silverius to the Goths was forged by Iulianus and Marcus. Prokopios and the *Book of Pontiffs* agree that Antonina was involved in these intrigues. Her agent in the matter was the eunuch Eugenios (*Secret History* 1.27). Silverius was later sent back to Italy where he was starved to death by Vigilius.



Sestertius of Nero (54–68 AD) showing the temple of Janus in Rome.

the crime against the emperor Valentinian.[560] And fearing that the guards at the gates might become involved in a plot, and that someone might thereby gain access from the outside by corrupting them with money, twice a month he destroyed all the keys and had new ones made, each time with a different shape, and he also changed the guards to other posts that were far removed from their previous ones, and every night he set different men in charge of those who were guarding the fortifications. [16] It was the duty of these officers to make the rounds of a section of the wall, taking turns in this work, and to write down the names of the guards; and, if anyone was missing from there, they put another man in his place for the moment, and on the next day they reported who the missing man was to Belisarios himself, so that he could be properly punished. [17] He ordered musicians to play their instruments on the fortifications at night, and he was always sending detachments of soldiers, especially Moors, outside the walls, whose duty it was always to pass the night about the moat, and he sent dogs with them so that no one could approach the fortifications, even at a distance, without being detected.

[18] At that time some of the Romans attempted secretly to force open the doors of the temple of Janus. [19] This Janus was the first among the ancient gods whom the Romans call in their own tongue *penates*. He has his temple in the forum, in front of the senate-house that is just above the *Tria Fata*, [20] for so the Romans call the Fates.[561] The temple is entirely of bronze and square in form, but it is only large enough to cover the statue of Janus. [21] This statue is of bronze, not less than five cubits high; in all other respects it resembles a man but its head has two faces, one of which is turned

560. 3.4.36. Flavius Maximus (an Anicius) was consul in 523 and married to a Gothic princess. He was killed by Goths on the way back to Rome in 552 (8.34.6). In 554, Justinian confiscated half the property given to Maximus by Theodahad from the estate of a certain Marcianus and gave it to Liberius (*Novel*, App. 7.1).

561. These were statues of the Fates or Sibyls supposedly set up by Tarquinius Priscus. They stood in the forum in front of the Curia Iulia.

toward the east and the other toward the west. [22] There are bronze doors fronting each face, which the Romans in ancient times were accustomed to close in time of peace and prosperity, and to open when they had war.[562] [23] But when the Romans came to honor, as truly as any others, the teachings of the Christians, then they would no longer open these doors, even when they were at war. [24] During this siege, however, some, I suppose, who had in mind the old belief, attempted secretly to open them but did not succeed entirely: they moved the doors only so far that they did not close as tightly against one another as formerly. [25] Those who attempted this escaped detection.[563] No investigation of the act was made, as it happened in a time of great confusion, given that it did not become known to the officers, nor did it reach the ears of the populace, except a very few.

26. Now Vittigis, driven at first by anger and perplexity, sent some of his spearmen to Ravenna with orders to kill all the Roman senators whom he had taken there at the beginning of this war. [2] Some of them, learning of this beforehand, succeeded in making their escape, among them Bergantinus and Reparatus, the brother of Vigilius, the chief priest of Rome, both of whom went into Liguria and remained there.[564] But all the rest were killed. [3] After this Vittigis, seeing that the enemy enjoyed great latitude not only to take out of the city whatever they wished but also to bring in provisions both by land and by sea, decided to seize the harbor, which the Romans call Portus. [4] It is 126 stades distant from the city, for that is the distance by which Rome is not a coastal city. [5] It is located where the Tiber river has its mouth. Now as it flows down from Rome and reaches a point near the sea, about fifteen stades from it, the stream divides into two and makes there the Sacred Island, as it is called. [6] As the river flows on, the island becomes wider so that its breadth corresponds to its length, for the two streams have between them a distance of fifteen stades; and the Tiber remains navigable on both sides. [7] Now the portion of the river on the right empties into the harbor, and outside the mouth the Romans in ancient times built a city on the shore that is surrounded by an extremely strong wall; and it is called, like the harbor, Portus. [8] But on the left, at the point where the other part of the Tiber empties into the sea, is situated the city of Ostia, lying beyond the place where the riverbank ends, an important place in former times but now entirely without walls. [9] Moreover, the Romans from the very start made a road leading from Portus to Rome, which was smooth and without

562. For another description of the temple, and a list of some of the few occasions when the doors were closed, see Plutarch, *Numa* 20.1. Ioannes Lydos discussed the god Janus in his *On the Months* 4.1–2.

563. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 6.27.2, on the mutilation of the Herms by unknown perpetrators.

564. Bergantinus was *comes patrimonii* (a fiscal official) under Athalaric (ca. 527) and would lead the resistance to the Goths in Liguria in 537–538; after the fall of Milan he went to Constantinople (6.21.41). Reparatus had been prefect of Rome ca. 527 and would be appointed praetorian prefect of Italy (538–539) after Fidelius; he was killed by the Goths when Milan fell in 539 (6.21.40).

any obstacles. [10] Many barges are always anchored in the harbor ready for service, and many oxen stand in readiness close by. [11] When the merchants reach the harbor with their ships, they unload their cargoes, place them in the barges, and sail up the Tiber to Rome; but they do not use sails or oars, for the boats cannot be propelled in the stream by any wind as the river twists around extremely and does not follow a straight course, nor can oars do anything either, as the force of the current is always against them. [12] Thus, they fasten ropes from the barges to the necks of the oxen and so draw them just like wagons up to Rome. [13] But on the other side of the river, as one goes from the city of Ostia to Rome, the road passes through forests and in general lies neglected, and is not even near the bank of the Tiber, as there is no towing of barges there. [14] So the Goths, finding the city at the harbor unguarded, captured it in their first attack, slew many of the Romans who lived there, and so took possession of the harbor as well as the city. [15] They established a thousand of their number there as guards, while the remainder returned to the camps. [16] As a result, it was impossible for the besieged to bring in the goods that came by sea except by way of Ostia, which naturally involved a great effort and danger besides. [17] For the Roman ships were not even able to put in there any longer, but they anchored at Anzio, a day's journey from Ostia. [18] They found great difficulty in carrying the cargoes from there to Rome, the cause being the scarcity of men. For Belisarios, fearing for the fortifications of Rome, had been unable to protect the harbor with any garrison at all. [19] I think that if even three hundred men had been on guard there, the barbarians would never have made an attempt on the place, which is extremely strong.

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27. The Goths accomplished this, then, on the third day after they were repulsed in the assault on the wall. But twenty days after the city and harbor of Portus were captured, Martinos and Valerianos arrived, bringing with them sixteen hundred horsemen, [2] most of whom were Huns, Slavs, and Antai, who are settled above the Danube river, not far from its banks. [3] Belisarios was pleased by their arrival and thought that from that point on his army ought to bring the war to the enemy. [4] So on the following day, he commanded one of his own spearmen, Traïanos by name, an impetuous and active fighter, to take two hundred cavalry of the guardsmen and go straight at the enemy, and, as soon as they came near the camps, to go up on a high hill (which he pointed out to him) and remain quietly there. [5] If the enemy came against them, he was not to allow the battle to come to close quarters nor to take up sword or spear, but to use bows only and, as soon as he found that his quiver was empty, he was to flee as hard as he could with no shame and retire to the walls on the run. [6] Those were his orders, while he held in readiness both the engines for shooting arrows and the men skilled in their use. Then Traïanos with the two hundred men went out from the Salaria Gate against the camp of the enemy. [7] The latter, amazed at the suddenness of the thing, rushed out from the camps, each man equipping himself as best he could. [8] But the men under Traïanos galloped to the top of the hill which Belisarios had shown them and from there began to ward off the barbarians with missiles. [9] As their shafts fell among a dense

throng, they were for the most part successful in hitting a man or a horse. But when all their missiles were spent, they rode back with all speed, while the Goths kept pressing upon them in pursuit. [10] When they came near the walls, the operators of the engines began to shoot missiles and the barbarians became terrified and abandoned the pursuit. [11] It is said that not less than one thousand Goths perished in this action. A few days later Belisarios sent Mundila, another of his own spearmen, and Diogenes, both exceptionally capable warriors, with three hundred guardsmen, ordering them to do the same thing as the previous group. They acted according to his instructions. [12] When the enemy confronted them, the result was that no fewer than in the previous action, perhaps even more, perished in the same way. [13] He sent a third time the spearman Oïla with three hundred horsemen with instructions to do the same to the enemy, and he accomplished the same result. [14] In making these three sallies, in the manner I explained, Belisarios destroyed about four thousand of the enemy.

[15] But Vittigis, failing to understand the difference between the two armies in equipment and practice of war, thought that he too could easily inflict grave losses on the enemy if only he attacked them with a small force. [16] He therefore sent five hundred horsemen, commanding them to go close to the fortifications and to perform against the whole enemy army the very same tactics that had often been used against them, to their sorrow, by small bands of the foe. [17] And so, when they came to a high place not far from the city, but just beyond the range of missiles, they took their stand. [18] Belisarios selected a thousand men, putting Bessas in command, and ordered them to advance on the enemy. [19] They formed a circle around the enemy and, by always shooting at them from behind, killed a large number; then they pressed hard upon the rest and compelled them to descend into the plain. [20] There a hand-to-hand battle took place between unevenly matched forces, and most of the Goths were destroyed, although some few escaped with difficulty and returned to their own camp. [21] Vittigis reviled them, assuming that cowardice caused their defeat, and vowed to find another group of men to make good the loss after no long time, but he remained quiet for the present. Three days later he selected men from all the camps, five hundred in number, and ordered them to perform valiant deeds against the enemy. [22] When Belisarios saw that these men had come rather near, he sent out against them fifteen hundred men under the commanders Martinos and Valerianos. [23] A cavalry battle immediately took place, where the Romans, being greatly superior to the enemy in numbers, routed them without any trouble and destroyed practically all of them.

[24] To the enemy this seemed in every way dreadful and a proof that fortune stood against them, if, when they were many and the enemy who came against them were few, they were defeated, and when, on the other hand, they in turn went in small numbers against them, they were also destroyed. [25] Belisarios, however, was praised in public by the Romans for his wisdom, of which they not unnaturally stood in awe, but in private his friends asked him on what he had based his judgment on that day when he had escaped from the enemy after being so completely defeated, and why he had been

confident that he would overcome them decisively in the war.[565] [26] He said that in engaging with them at first with only a few men he had realized just what the difference was between the two armies, so that if he were to fight battles with them with a force proportionate to theirs in strength, the multitudes of the enemy could not harm the Romans by reason of the smallness of their numbers. [27] And the difference was this, that practically all the Romans and their allies, the Huns, are good mounted archers, but this fighting style was not practiced among the Goths, whose horsemen are accustomed to use only spears and swords while their archers enter battle on foot and are shielded by their infantry. [28] So unless the engagement is at close quarters, the horsemen have no means of defending themselves against opponents who use the bow and can easily be struck and destroyed; and as for the foot soldiers, they would never be able to sally against men on horseback. [29] It was for these reasons, Belisarios said, that the barbarians had been defeated by the Romans in these last engagements. And the Goths, keeping in mind the unexpected outcome of their own efforts, no longer assaulted the walls of Rome in small numbers or pursued the enemy when harassed by them, except only insofar as to drive them back from their own camps.

28. But later on all the Romans, elated by the good fortune they had enjoyed, were eager to do battle with the whole Gothic army and thought that they should make war in the open field. [2] Belisarios, considering that the difference in size of the two armies was still very great, continued to be reluctant to risk a decisive battle with his whole army, and so he pressed on still more with his sallies and kept organizing them against the enemy. [3] But when at last he yielded because of the abuse heaped upon him by the army and the Romans in general, although he was willing to fight with the whole army, yet nevertheless he wished to open the engagement by a sudden sally. [4] Many times he was blocked when he was on the point of doing this and was compelled to put off the attack to the following day, because he found to his surprise that the enemy had been previously informed by deserters as to what was going to happen and were ready for him. [5] For this reason, then, he was now willing to fight a decisive battle even in the open field, and the barbarians gladly came forth for the battle. When both sides had prepared for the conflict as well as they could, Belisarios gathered his whole army and exhorted them as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman army

[6] It is not because I despise you for any softness, fellow soldiers, nor because I was terrified at the strength of the enemy, that I have held back from engaging with them, but I saw that while we were carrying on the war by making sudden sallies things were going well for us, and consequently I thought that we ought to adhere permanently to the tactics that were causing our success. [7] For I think that when one's present affairs are going satisfactorily, it is disadvantageous to switch to another plan. But as I see that you are eager for this danger, I am filled with confidence and will never oppose your zeal. [8] For I know that the

565. 5.18.42.

greatest factor in the outcome of war is always the attitude of the fighting men, and it is generally by their enthusiasm that successes are won. [9] Now, the fact that a few men drawn up for battle with valor on their side are able to overcome a multitude of the enemy is well known by every one of you, not by hearsay but by daily experience of fighting. [10] It is up to you now not to bring shame upon the former glories of my campaigns nor upon the hope which this enthusiasm of yours inspires. [11] For all that we have already accomplished in this war must necessarily be judged by today's outcome. [12] I see that the present moment is also in our favor, for it will, in all probability, make it easier for us to prevail over the enemy, because their spirit is oppressed by what has gone before. [13] For when men have failed often, their hearts are no longer eager for deeds of valor. Let no one of you spare horse or bow or any weapon. [14] I will immediately provide you with others in place of all that are destroyed in the battle.

[15] After speaking these words of exhortation, Belisarios led his army out through the small Pinciana Gate and the Salaria Gate, and commanded a few men to go through the Aurelia Gate into the Plain of Nero. [16] Those he put under the command of Valentinos, who led a cavalry detachment, and he directed him not to begin any fighting or go too close to the camp of the enemy, but to give the appearance of always being about to attack immediately, so that none of the enemy in that quarter might be able to cross the bridge there and come to the assistance of the soldiers from the other camps. [17] As I have previously stated,[566] the barbarians encamped in the Plain of Nero were many, so it seemed to him sufficient if they should all be prevented from taking part in the engagement and be kept apart from the rest of the army. [18] When some of the Roman populace took up arms and followed as volunteers, he did not allow them to be drawn up for battle along with the regular soldiers, fearing that they would become terrified at the danger when it came to actual fighting and so throw the entire army into confusion, as they were working-class men altogether unpracticed in war. [19] He ordered them to form a phalanx and remain quiet outside the Pancratian Gate, which is beyond the Tiber river, until he himself gave the signal, reasoning, as actually proved to be the case, that if the enemy in the Plain of Nero saw both them and the men under Valentinos, they would never dare to leave their camp and enter battle with the rest of their own army against his forces. [20] He considered it a stroke of good luck and a very important advantage that such a large number of men should be kept apart from the enemy army.

[21] In these circumstances, he wished on that day to engage in a cavalry battle only, and indeed most of the infantry were unwilling to remain at their regular posts, but rather, as they had captured horses as booty from the enemy and had practiced horsemanship, they were now cavalry. [22] The rest of the infantry were few in number, unable even to make a phalanx of any consequence, and had never had the courage to engage with the barbarians, but always turned to flight at the first onset; he therefore considered it unsafe

566. 5.19.12.

to draw them up at a distance from the walls, but thought it best that they remain in position close by the moat, so that, if it should so happen that the Roman cavalry was routed, they would be able to receive the fugitives and, as a fresh body of men, fight off the enemy with them. [23] But a certain Prinkipios from among his spearmen, a man of note and a Pisidian by birth, and Tarmoutos, an Isaurian, the brother of Ennes who commanded the Isaurians, came before Belisarios and spoke as follows:

Prinkipios and Tarmoutos to Belisarios

[24] Best of generals, we beg you not to decide that your army, small as it is and about to fight with many tens of thousands of barbarians, be cut off from the phalanx of the infantry, nor to think that one ought to treat with contempt the infantry of the Romans, by means of which, we hear, the power of the ancient Romans was brought to its present greatness. [25] For if they have done nothing of note in this war, this is not proof of the soldiers' cowardice; it is the commanders of the infantry who should justly bear the blame, for they alone ride on horses in the battle line and are not willing to endure the fortunes of war as shared by all, but each one of them by himself typically flees before even the struggle begins. [26] But you, who see that the infantry commanders have become cavalry and are unwilling to take a stand beside their subordinates, should include them all with the rest of the cavalry and allow them to enter this battle there, but permit us to lead the infantry into the combat. [27] For we also are unmounted and we will help them to withstand the multitude of the barbarians, full of hope that we will inflict upon the enemy whatever God permits.

[28] When Belisarios heard this, at first he did not consent to it for he was extremely fond of these two men, who were fighters of marked excellence, and he was unwilling to have a small body of infantry take such a risk. [29] But finally, pressured by the eagerness of the men, he consented to leave a small number of soldiers, in company with the Roman populace, to man the gates and battlements above where the engines of war were, and to put the rest under the command of Prinkipios and Tarmoutos, with orders to take position in the rear and in formation. His purpose was, first, to keep these soldiers from throwing the rest of the army into confusion if they themselves became panic-stricken at the danger, and, second, in case any cavalry unit was routed at any time, to prevent the retreat from extending indefinitely, but to allow the cavalry simply to fall back to the infantry and make it possible for them, with their help, to defend against the pursuers.

29. The Romans, then, prepared for battle in that way. As for Vittigis, he had armed all the Goths, leaving not a man behind in the camps, except those unfit for fighting. [2] He commanded the men under Marcia to remain in the Plain of Nero and guard the bridge, so that the enemy could not attack his men from that direction. He himself then called together the rest of the army and spoke as follows:

Vittigis to the Gothic army

[3] It may perhaps seem to some of you that I fear for my position and that is why I have been so kind toward you and, on the present occasion, am addressing you with flattering words to inspire you with courage. [4] Such reasoning is not

inconsistent with the way men behave. For ignorant men tend to show gentleness toward those whom they need to use, even if the latter happen to be in a much humbler station than they, but to be difficult of access to others whose services they do not need. [5] As for me, however, I care neither for the end of life nor the loss of power. I would even pray that I take off this purple today, so long as a Goth were to put it on. [6] I have always regarded the end of Theodahad as one of the most blessed, in that he lost both his position and his life at the hands of men of his own nation. [7] For a calamity that falls upon an individual in private, without involving his nation also in destruction, does not lack an element of consolation, in the view, at least, of men who are not fools. [8] But when I reflect on the fate of the Vandals and the end of Gelimer, my thoughts are not at all calm: no, I seem to see the Goths and their children reduced to slavery, your wives serving the most hateful men in the most shameful ways, and myself and the granddaughter of Theoderic[567] led wherever it suits the pleasure of those who are now our enemies. I would have you enter battle fearing that this fate might befall us. [9] For if you do this, on the field of battle you will count the end of life as more to be desired than safety after defeat. Noble men consider that there is only one misfortune: to survive defeat at the hands of their enemy. [10] As for death, especially if it comes quickly, it always brings happiness to those who were before not favored by fortune. [11] It is clear that if you keep these thoughts in mind as you go into this engagement, you will not only conquer your opponents most easily, few as they are and mere Graeci, but will also punish them for the injustice and insolence with which they treated us first. [12] We boast that we are their superiors in valor, numbers, and every other respect; the audacity with which they come against us is due merely to elation at our misfortunes, and the only asset they have is the hesitation we have shown. Their boldness is fed by their undeserved good fortune.

[13] With this exhortation Vittigis too arrayed his army for battle, stationing the infantry in the center and the cavalry on the two wings. [14] He did not, however, draw up his phalanx far from the camps, but near them, in order that, as soon as the rout took place, the enemy might easily be overtaken and killed, with an abundance of room for pursuit. [15] For he hoped that if the struggle became a pitched battle in the plain, they would not withstand him even a short time, basing his judgment on the great disproportion, namely that the enemy army was not evenly matched with his own.

[16] So the soldiers on both sides, beginning in the early morning, opened battle, and Vittigis and Belisarios were in the rear urging on both armies and inciting them to good cheer. [17] At first the Roman arms prevailed and the barbarians kept falling in great numbers before their archery, but no pursuit of them was made. [18] For as the Goths stood in a dense mass, other men easily took the places of those who were killed, and so the loss of those who fell among them was not apparent. But the Romans were satisfied, in view of their small number, that the struggle was having such a result for

567. Matasuntha; see 5.11.27.

them. [19] So after they had by midday carried the battle as far as the camps of their opponents, and had already slain many of the enemy, they wanted to return to the city if any opening presented itself to them. [20] In this part of the action three among the Romans proved themselves brave men above all others, Athenodoros, an Isaurian and a man of fame among the spearmen of Belisarios, Theodoriskos, and Georgios, spearmen of Martinos and Kappadokians by birth. [21] For they kept going out beyond the front of the phalanx and there dispatched many of the barbarians with their spears. Such was the course of events there. [22] But in the Plain of Nero the two armies remained for a long time facing one another, with the Moors harrying the Goths by making constant sallies and hurling their javelins at the enemy. [23] For the latter were unwilling to go out against them because they feared the forces of the Roman populace that were not far away, thinking, of course, that they were soldiers and were remaining quiet because they had in mind some sort of an ambush against them with the purpose of getting behind them, exposing them to attack on both sides, and so destroying them. [24] But when it was now the middle of the day, the Roman army suddenly charged the enemy and the Goths were unexpectedly routed, being paralyzed by the suddenness of the attack. [25] They did not succeed even in fleeing to their camp, but took to the hills nearby and remained quiet. Now the Romans, although many in number, were not all soldiers, but were for the most part an unarmed crowd. [26] As the general was elsewhere, many sailors and servants in the Roman army mingled with that part of the army in their eagerness to have a share in the war. [27] By their mere numbers they did overawe the barbarians and turn them to flight, as has been said, yet by their lack of order they lost the day for the Romans. [28] For the intermixture of those men caused the soldiers to be thrown into great disorder, and although Valentinos kept shouting orders to them, they could not hear his commands. [29] For this reason they did not follow up the fugitives or kill anyone, but allowed them to stand at rest on the hills and safely view what was going on. [30] Nor did they think to destroy the bridge there and thus prevent the city from being afterward besieged on both sides, for then the barbarians would have been unable to encamp any longer on the farther side of the Tiber river. [31] Furthermore, they did not even cross the bridge and get in the rear of their opponents who were fighting there with the soldiers of Belisarios. If this had been done, the Goths, I think, would no longer have thought of resistance but would have turned instantly to flight, each man as he could. [32] As it was, they took possession of the enemy's camp and turned to plundering their goods, carrying away from it many vessels of silver and many other valuables. [33] The barbarians for some time remained quietly where they were observing what was going on, but finally by common consent they advanced against their opponents with great fury and shouting. [34] Finding men engaged in plundering their property and in complete disorder, they slew many and quickly drove out the rest. For all of them who were [not] trapped inside the camp were not killed, gladly shrugging their plunder from their shoulders and taking flight.

[35] While this was taking place in the Plain of Nero, the rest of the barbarian army stayed near their camps and, protecting themselves with their shields, vigorously

defended themselves against their opponents, destroying many men and a much larger number of horses. [36] When the Romans who had either been wounded or lost their horses left the ranks, then, in an army that had been small even before, the smallness of their numbers was still more apparent, and the difference between them and the Gothic host was manifestly great. [37] The horsemen of the barbarians who were on the right wing, taking note of this, advanced at a gallop against the enemy opposite them. The Romans there, unable to withstand their spears, rushed off in flight and came to the infantry phalanx. [38] The infantry also were unable to hold their ground against the oncoming horsemen, and most of them began to join the cavalry in flight. The rest of the Roman army immediately also began to retire, the enemy pressing upon them, and the rout became total. [39] But Prinkipios and Tarmoutos with a few of the infantry of their command made a display of valiant deeds against the Goths. [40] As they continued to fight and disdained to flee with the others, most of the Goths were so amazed that they halted. Consequently the rest of the infantry and most of the horsemen made their escape in safety. [41] Now Prinkipios fell where he stood, his whole body butchered, and around him fell forty-two foot soldiers. [42] But Tarmoutos, holding two Isaurian javelins, one in each hand, continued to thrust them into his assailants as he turned from side to side, until, finally, he stopped because his body was covered with wounds; but when his brother Ennes came to the rescue with some cavalry, he revived and, running swiftly covered with gore and wounds, he made for the fortifications without throwing down either of his javelins. [43] Being fleet of foot by nature, he succeeded in making his escape, in spite of the state of his body, and did not fall until he had just reached the Pinciana Gate. Some of his comrades, supposing him to be dead, lifted him on a shield and carried him. [44] He lived on two days before he died, leaving a high reputation both among the Isaurians and the rest of the army. [45] The Romans, meanwhile, were by now thoroughly frightened and attended to the guarding of the wall; shutting the gates they refused, in their great excitement, to receive the fugitives into the city, fearing that the enemy would rush in with them. [46] The fugitives who had not yet got inside the fortifications crossed the moat and, standing with their backs braced against the wall, were trembling with fear and stood there forgetful of all valor and utterly unable to defend against the barbarians, although the latter were pressing upon them and were about to cross the moat to attack them. [47] The reason was that most of them had broken their spears in the engagement or during the flight, and they were unable to use their bows because they were huddled so closely together. [48] So long as not many defenders were seen at the battlement, the Goths kept pressing on, hoping to destroy all who had been shut out and to overpower the men who held the walls. [49] But when they saw a great number of soldiers and the Roman populace at the battlements defending the wall, they immediately gave up and rode off to the rear, heaping much abuse upon their opponents. [50] The battle, having begun at the camps of the barbarians, thus ended at the moat and the wall of the city.

Book Six

spring 537 **1.** After that the Romans no longer dared risk a battle with their whole army, but they engaged in cavalry battles, making sudden sallies in the same way as before, and were generally victorious over the barbarians. [2] Foot soldiers also went out from both sides, not, however, arrayed in a phalanx but following the horsemen. [3] One time Bessas in the first rush jumped in among the enemy with his spear and killed three of their best horsemen and turned the rest to flight. [4] Another time Konstantinos had led the Huns out into the Plain of Nero in the late afternoon, and when he saw that they were being overpowered by the multitude of their opponents, he did as follows. [5] There has been in that place since ancient times a great stadium where the gladiators of the city used to fight, and the men of old built many other structures about this stadium; thus there are, as one would expect, narrow passages all about this place.[568] [6] Now at that time, as Konstantinos could neither overcome the throng of the Goths nor flee without great danger, he had all the Huns dismount from their horses and, with them on foot, took his stand in one of the narrow passages there. [7] Then by shooting from that safe position they slew large numbers of the enemy. For a time the Goths held their ground while being shot at. [8] For they hoped that, as soon as the Huns' quivers had no more arrows, they would surround them without trouble, take them prisoner, and lead them back to their camp. [9] But the Massagetai, who were not only good archers but also had a dense throng to shoot into, hit an enemy with practically every shot. The Goths saw that above half their number had perished and, as the sun was about to set, they did not know what to do and so fled. [10] Then indeed many of them fell, for the Massagetai followed them up and, as they know how to shoot the bow with the greatest accuracy even when running at great speed, they continued to kill them no less than before by shooting at their backs. Thus Konstantinos with his Huns came back to Rome at night.

[11] When Peranios, not many days later, led some of the Romans through the Salaria Gate against the enemy, the Goths fled as hard as they could, but about sunset a counter-pursuit was made suddenly and a Roman foot soldier, caught in the press, fell into a deep hole, many of which were made there by the men of old for the storage of grain, I suppose. [12] And he did not dare to cry out, as the enemy were encamped nearby, nor was he able in any way to get out of the pit, for it afforded no means of climbing up, and so he was compelled to spend the night there. [13] On the next day, when the barbarians had again been put to flight, one of the Goths fell into the same hole. [14] And there the two men were reconciled to mutual friendship and goodwill, brought together as they were by their necessity, and they exchanged solemn pledges

568. Possibly these were the remains of the Naumachia Traiani (for water entertainments).

that each would work earnestly for the salvation of the other; then both of them began shouting loudly at the top of their voices. [15] Now the Goths, following the sound, peered over the edge of the hole and asked who was shouting. [16] At this, the Roman kept silence, just as the two men had agreed beforehand, while the other man said in his native tongue that he had just then fallen in there during the rout that had taken place, and asked them to let down a rope that he might come up. [17] As quickly as possible they threw down the ends of ropes and, as they thought, were pulling up the Goth, but the Roman took hold of the ropes and was pulled up, saying only that if he went up first the Goths would never abandon their comrade, but if they learned that merely one of the enemy was there they would take no account of him. Saying this, he went up. [18] When the Goths saw him, they were amazed and did not know what to do, but upon hearing the story from him they drew up his comrade next and he told them about the agreement they had made and the pledges both had given. [19] So he went off with his companions and the Roman was released unharmed and permitted to return to the city. [20] After this horsemen in small numbers armed themselves many times for battle, but the struggles always ended in single combats, and the Romans were victorious in all of them. Such, then, was the course of these events.

[21] A little later an engagement took place in the Plain of Nero, wherein small groups of cavalry were engaged in pursuing their opponents in various directions, and Chorsamantis, a man of note among the spearmen of Belisarios, by birth a Massagete, was pursuing seventy of the enemy with some others. [22] When he had got well out in the plain the other Romans rode back but Chorsamantis went on with the pursuit alone. When the Goths perceived this, they turned their horses about and came against him. [23] And he advanced into their midst, killed one of their best men with his spear, and then went after the others, but they again turned and rushed off in flight. [24] But they were ashamed before their comrades in the camp, who, they suspected, could already see them, and wished to attack him again. [25] They had, however, precisely the same experience as before and lost one of their best men, and so turned to flight again in spite of their shame. Chorsamantis pursued them as far as their stockade and returned alone. [26] A little later, in another battle, this man was wounded in the left shin, and it was his opinion that the weapon had merely grazed the bone. [27] However, he was rendered unfit for fighting for a certain number of days because of this wound and, given that he was a barbarian, he did not endure this patiently but threatened that he would speedily have vengeance upon the Goths for this insult to his leg. [28] Not long afterward, when he had recovered and was drunk at lunch, as was his custom, he decided to go alone against the enemy and avenge the insult to his leg; and when he had come to the small Pinciana Gate he said that he was being sent by Belisarios to the enemy's camp. [29] The guards there, who could not doubt the word of one of the best spearmen of Belisarios, opened the gates and allowed him to go wherever he wanted. [30] When the enemy saw him, they thought at first that some deserter was coming over to them, but when he came near and reached for his bow, twenty men, not knowing who he was, went out against him. [31] These he easily drove off, and then

began to ride back at a walk, and when more Goths came against him he did not flee. [32] When a great throng gathered about him, he insisted on fighting them, but the Romans, watching this from the towers, suspected that the man was crazy but did not yet know it was Chorsamantis. [33] He performed great and noteworthy deeds, but was surrounded by the army of the enemy and paid the price for his irrational daring. [34] When Belisarios and the Roman army learned this, they mourned greatly, lamenting that the hope they all placed in the man had come to nothing.

spring 537

2. Now a certain Euthalios, at about the spring equinox,[569] came to Terracina from Byzantion with the money owed by the emperor to the soldiers. [2] Fearing that the enemy might encounter him on the road, rob him of the money, and kill him, he wrote to Belisarios requesting to make the journey to Rome safe for him. [3] Belisarios accordingly selected one hundred of his best guardsmen and sent them to Terracina with two spearmen to assist him in bringing the money. [4] At the same time he kept trying to make the barbarians believe that he was about to fight with his whole army, his purpose being to prevent any of the enemy from leaving the vicinity, either to bring in provisions or for any other purpose. [5] When he found out that Euthalios and his men would arrive on the next day, he arrayed his army and set it in order for battle, and the barbarians were in readiness too. [6] He kept his soldiers by the gates throughout the late morning, for he knew that Euthalios and those with him would arrive at night. [7] Then, at midday, he commanded the army to take their lunch and the Goths did the same thing, supposing that he was putting off the engagement to the following day. [8] A little later, however, Belisarios sent Martinos and Valerianos to the Plain of Nero with their men, directing them to throw the enemy camp into the greatest possible confusion. [9] From the small Pinciana Gate he sent out six hundred horsemen against the camps of the barbarians, [10] placing them under command of three of his spearmen, Artasires, a Persian, Bochas, of the race of the Massagetai, and Koutilas, a Thracian. Many of the enemy came out to meet them. [11] For a long time, however, the battle did not come to close quarters, but each side kept retreating when the other advanced and pursuing but then quickly turning back, until it looked as if they intended to spend the rest of the day at this sort of thing. [12] But as they continued, they began at last to be filled with rage against each other. The battle then settled down to a fierce struggle in which many of the best men on both sides fell, and support came up for each of the two armies, from the city and the camps. [13] When they mixed with the fighters the struggle became still greater. The shouting that filled the city and the camps terrified the combatants. [14] But finally the Romans by their valor forced back the enemy and routed them. In this action Koutilas was struck in the middle of the head by a javelin, but he kept on pursuing with the javelin still embedded in his head. [15] After the rout was finished, he rode into the city about sunset with the other survivors, the javelin in his head waving around, an extraordinary sight. [16] In the same encounter Arzes, one

569. The term used by Prokopios here could also indicate the summer solstice in June.

of Belisarios' guardsmen, was hit by one of the Gothic archers between the nose and the right eye. [17] The point of the arrow penetrated as far as the neck behind, but it did not show through, and the rest of the shaft projected from his face and shook as the man rode. [18] When the Romans saw him and Koutilas they marveled greatly that both men continued to ride, paying no heed to their wounds. Such, then, was the course of events there.

[19] But in the Plain of Nero the barbarians had the upper hand. For the men of Valerianos and Martinos, fighting with a great multitude of the enemy, withstood them vigorously, to be sure, but suffered most terribly and came into extremely great danger. [20] And then Belisarios commanded Bochas to take his soldiers who had returned from the engagement intact in their own bodies as well as their horses, and go to the Plain of Nero. [21] It was already late in the day. When Bochas' men came to the assistance of the Romans, suddenly the barbarians were turned to flight, and Bochas, who followed the pursuit to a great distance, was surrounded by twelve of the enemy who carried spears. [22] They all struck him at once with their spears. But his breastplate withstood the other blows, which did not hurt him much, but one of the Goths managed to hit the young man from behind, above the right armpit and close to the shoulder, where he was unprotected, although it was not a mortal stroke, nor even one that brought him into danger of death. [23] But another Goth then struck him in front and pierced his left thigh, cutting the muscles there; it was not a straight blow, however, only a slanting cut. [24] Valerianos and Martinos saw what was happening and, coming to his rescue as quickly as possible, they routed the enemy. Both took hold of the bridle of Bochas' horse and came into the city. Then night fell and Euthalios entered the city with the money.

[25] When all had returned to the city, they attended to the wounded men. In the case of Arzes, although the physicians wished to draw the weapon from his face, they were for some time reluctant to do so, not so much on account of the eye, which they supposed could not possibly be saved, but for fear that, by cutting the membranes and tissues that are very numerous in that region, they might cause the death of one of the best men of Belisarios' household. [26] But afterward one of the physicians, Theoktistos by name, pressed on the back of his neck and asked whether he felt much pain. [27] When the man said that he did feel pain, he said, "Then you yourself will be saved and your sight will not be impaired." He made this declaration because he inferred that the barb of the weapon had penetrated to a point not far from the skin. [28] So he cut off the part of the shaft that showed outside and threw it away, and, cutting open the skin at the back of the head, at the place where the man felt the most pain, he easily drew out the barb, which with its three sharp points now stuck out behind and brought with it the remaining part of the weapon. [29] Thus Arzes entirely escaped serious harm, and not a trace of his wound was left on his face. [30] But as for Koutilas, when the javelin was drawn rather violently from his head (for it was deeply embedded), he fainted. [31] As the membranes about the wound began to be inflamed, he fell a victim to phrenitis and died not long afterward. [32] Bochas immediately had a very severe hemorrhage in

the thigh, and seemed to be about to die. The reason for the hemorrhage, according to the physicians, was that the blow had severed the muscle not directly from the front, but by a slanting cut. He died three days later. [33] Because of these things, then, the Romans spent that whole night in deep grief. From the Gothic camps were heard many sounds of wailing and loud lamentation. [34] The Romans wondered at this, because they thought that no misfortune of consequence had befallen the enemy on the previous day, except, to be sure, that many of them had perished in the battles. [35] But that had happened to them before to no less a degree, perhaps even a greater one, and it had not greatly distressed them then, so great were their numbers. [36] However, it was learned on the following day that men of the greatest note from the camp in the Plain of Nero were being lamented by the Goths, men whom Bochas had killed in his first charge. [37] And other battles also, although not crucial ones, took place, which it has seemed to me unnecessary to chronicle. Altogether sixty-seven of them occurred during this siege, besides two final ones that will be described in the following narrative. [38] At that time the winter drew to its close, and thus ended the second year of this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[570]

3. At the beginning of the spring equinox famine and pestilence together fell upon the inhabitants of the city. There was still some grain left for the soldiers, although no other kind of provisions, but the grain supply of the rest of the Romans had been exhausted, and actual famine as well as pestilence was pressing hard upon them. [2] The Goths, perceiving this, no longer wanted to risk battle with their enemy, but they kept watch to prevent anything in the future from being brought in to them. [3] Now there are two aqueducts between the Latin and the Appian Ways, extremely high and carried on arches for a great distance. [4] These two aqueducts meet fifty stades distant from Rome and cross each other, so that for a short space they reverse their relative position: [5] the one that previously lay to the right from then on continues on the left side. [6] Farther on they meet again and resume their former places, thereafter remaining apart.[571] Thus the space between them, enclosed as it is by the aqueducts, forms a fortress. [7] The barbarians walled up the lower arches of the aqueducts here with stones and mud and in this way gave it the form of a fort, and encamping there to the number of no fewer than seven thousand men, they kept guard so that no provisions should thereafter be brought into the city by the enemy. [8] Then every hope of a better future abandoned the Romans and the fear of every evil met them wherever they turned. As long as there was ripe grain, the most daring of the soldiers, led on by lust of money, went by night to the grain fields not far from the city mounted on horses and leading other horses after them. [9] They cut the heads of grain and, putting them on the spare horses, would carry them into the city without being seen by the enemy and sell them at high prices to wealthy Romans. [10] The other inhabitants survived on herbs that grow in abundance

570. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 536 to spring 537.

571. These are probably the Aqua Claudia and Aqua Anio Novus.

in the outskirts and inside the fortifications. For the land of the Romans never lacks in herbs either in winter or any other season, but they always bloom and grow luxuriantly at all times. [11] Hence the besieged also pastured their horses in those places. Some too made sausages of the mules that died in Rome and sold them secretly. [12] But when the fields had no more grain and all the Romans had come into an extremely evil plight, they surrounded Belisarios and tried to compel him to stake everything on a single battle with the enemy, promising that not one of the Romans would be absent from the engagement. He was at a loss what to do in that situation and was greatly distressed, whereupon some of the populace spoke to him as follows:

Roman populace to Belisarios

> [13] General, we were not expecting the fortune that has overtaken us at the present time; on the contrary, matters have turned out entirely to the contrary from what we hoped. [14] For after achieving what we had formerly set our hearts on, we have now come into this misfortune and realize that our previous desire for the emperor's solicitude was folly and the cause of the greatest evils. [15] Indeed, it has brought us to such straits that at the present time we have taken courage to force the issue once again and to arm ourselves against the barbarians. [16] We apologize for coming so boldly into the presence of Belisarios, but the belly knows no shame when it lacks what it needs. [17] Our current state must be the apology for our rashness, for it is reasonable to claim that there is no plight more intolerable for men than a life prolonged amid adversity. Surely you can see what is happening to us. [18] These fields and the whole country have fallen under the hand of the enemy. This city has been shut off from all good things for we know not how long a time. [19] As for the Romans, some already lie dead, although it has not been their lot to be buried in the earth, while we who survive, to put all our terrible misfortunes in but a word, pray to be placed beside those who lie dead. [20] For those suffering of starvation learn that all other evils can be endured: wherever it appears it causes one to forget all other sufferings and makes all other forms of death, except that which proceeds from itself, seem pleasant. [21] Now, then, before this evil has yet mastered us, grant us leave to take up the struggle on our own behalf, which will result either in our overcoming the enemy or rid us from our troubles. [22] For when delay brings to men hope of safety, it would be foolish for them to prematurely take an all-or-nothing risk, but when delaying makes the struggle harder, to put off action even for a little is more reprehensible than reckless haste.

[23] So spoke the Romans. Belisarios replied as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman populace

> As for me, I have been quite prepared for your reaction in every respect, and nothing has happened contrary to my expectation. [24] For long have I known that a populace is a most unreasoning thing, and that by its nature it cannot endure the present or plan for the future, but knows only how to attempt the impossible rashly in every case and to recklessly destroy itself. [25] For my part, I will never, willingly at least, be led by your recklessness either to destroy you or to involve the emperor's cause in ruin with you. [26] War is not brought to a successful conclusion by irrational haste but rather always tilts this way or that through good

counsel and forethought at decisive moments. [27] You act as though you were playing at dice and want to risk all on a single cast, but it is not my policy to choose the short course in preference to the advantageous one. [28] In the second place, you announce that you will help us do battle against the enemy, but when have you ever trained in war? Or, among those who have learned such things by experience of arms, who does not know that battle is no place for an experiment? Nor does the enemy give you the opportunity to practice on him while the struggle is on. [29] I admire your zeal and forgive you for making this disturbance. [30] But I will also explain that you have done this at an unseasonable time and that the policy of waiting that we are following is prudent. The emperor has gathered for us from the whole earth and sent an army too great to number, and a fleet such as was never brought together by the Romans now covers the shore of Campania and the greater part of the Adriatic Sea. [31] In a few days they will come to us and bring all kinds of provisions, to put an end to our starvation and bury the barbarian camps under a multitude of missiles. [32] I have therefore reasoned that it was better to put off the time of conflict until they are present, and thereby prevail safely in the war, than to make a show of daring in irrational haste and so throw away the salvation of our whole cause. I will make sure that they arrive immediately and no longer delay.

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4. With these words Belisarios emboldened the Roman populace and dismissed them. Prokopios, who wrote this history, he immediately commanded to go to Naples, for a rumor was going around that the emperor had sent an army there.[572] [2] He commanded him to load as many ships as possible with grain and to gather all the soldiers who had then arrived from Byzantion or had been left in Naples to guard the horses or for any other purpose—for he had heard that many were going to various places in Campania—and also to withdraw some of the men from the garrisons there; then he was to come back with them, convoying the grain to Ostia, where the harbor of the Romans was. [3] Prokopios, accompanied by Mundila the guardsman and a few horsemen, passed out by night through the gate named after the Apostle Paul,[573] eluding the enemy camp that had been established close to the Appian Way in order to guard it. [4] When Mundila and his men returned to Rome and announced that Prokopios had already arrived in Campania without meeting any of the barbarians—for at night, they said, the enemy never left their camp—everybody became hopeful, and Belisarios, emboldened, devised the following plan. [5] He sent out many of his horsemen to the neighboring strongholds, directing them that, if any of the enemy should come that way in order to bring provisions into their camps, they should constantly make sallies upon them from their positions and lay ambushes everywhere in that region, and so prevent them from succeeding; with all their might they should hedge them in so that the city would be in less distress than formerly through lack of provisions, and also so

572. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 4.104.4, where the historian refers in the same terms to his own mission to Amphipolis.

573. I.e., the Porta Ostiensis.

that the barbarians might seem to be besieged rather than to be besieging the Romans. [6] So he commanded Martinos and Traïanos to go to Terracina with a thousand men. He sent also his wife, Antonina, with them, commanding that she be sent on with a few men to Naples to await in safety the fortune that would befall the Romans. [7] He sent Magnos and Sinduit the spearman, who took with them about five hundred men, to the fortress of Tivoli, 140 stades distant from Rome. [8] To the town of Albano, situated on the Appian Way at the same distance, he happened to have already sent Gontharis with a number of Heruls, whom the Goths had driven out from there by force not long after.

[9] Now there is a certain church of the Apostle Paul, fourteen stades distant from the fortifications of Rome, and the Tiber river flows beside it.[574] In that place there is no fortification, but a colonnade extends all the way from the city to the church, and many other buildings that are there around it make the place inaccessible. [10] But the Goths show a degree of respect for these sanctuaries. Indeed, during the whole time of the war no harm came to either church of the two Apostles at their hands, but all the rites were performed in them by the priests as before. [11] At this spot, then, Belisarios commanded Valerianos to take all the Huns and make a stockade by the bank of the Tiber, in order that their horses might be pastured more safely and that the Goths be further hindered from going at their pleasure to great distances from their camps. [12] Valerianos acted accordingly. Then, after the Huns had made their camp in the place where the general directed, he rode back to the city. [13] So Belisarios, having arranged these matters, remained quiet, not offering battle, but intending to carry on the defense from the wall, if anyone advanced against it from outside with evil intent. [14] And he also provided grain to part of the Roman populace. Martinos and Traïanos passed by night between the camps of the enemy and, after reaching Terracina, sent Antonina with a few men into Campania. They themselves took over the fortified places in that district, from where they launched sudden attacks and checked the Goths who were moving in that region. [15] As for Magnos and Sinduit, in a short time they rebuilt the parts of the fortress that had fallen into ruin, and as soon as they were in a position of safety, they began immediately to make more trouble for the enemy, whose fortress was not far away, by making frequent raids on them and by keeping the barbarians who were escorting provision trains in a constant state of terror by the unexpectedness of their movements. But finally Sinduit was wounded in his right hand by a spear in a battle, and, as the sinews were severed, he was thereafter unfit for fighting. [16] So too the Huns, after they made their camp nearby, as I said,[575] were for their part causing the Goths no less trouble, so that the latter as well as the Romans were now feeling the pinch of famine, as they were no longer free to bring in their food supplies as formerly. [17] Pestilence too fell upon them and killed many, especially in the camp they had last made close to the Appian Way, as I previously stated.[576] [18] The few of them who had not perished withdrew from there to

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574. This is the basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

575. 6.4.11.

576. 6.3.7.

the other camps. The Huns also suffered in the same way, and so returned to Rome. Such was the course of events here. [19] But as for Prokopios, when he reached Campania he collected not fewer than five hundred soldiers there, loaded a great number of ships with grain, and held them in readiness. [20] He was joined not long afterward by Antonina, who immediately assisted him in making arrangements for the fleet.

[21] At that time the mountain Vesuvius rumbled, and though it did not erupt, its rumbling led people to expect with great certainty that there would be an eruption. For this reason it came about that the inhabitants fell into great terror.[577] [22] This mountain is seventy stades distant from Naples and to the north[578]—an extremely steep mountain, whose lower parts spread out wide in a circle while its upper part is precipitous and extremely difficult to ascend. [23] But on the summit of Vesuvius and at the center of it appears a cavern of such depth that one would estimate that it extends all the way to the bottom of the mountain. [24] It is possible to see fire there, if one dares to peer over the edge, and although the flames as a rule merely twist and turn upon one another, giving the inhabitants of that region no trouble, yet, when the mountain makes a rumbling sound like bellowing, it usually sends up not long after a mass of ashes. [25] If anyone walking on the road is caught by this horror, he cannot possibly survive, and if it falls upon houses, they too collapse under the quantity of ashes. [26] But whenever it happens that a strong wind comes on, the ashes rise to a great height so that they are no longer visible to the eye, and are borne wherever the wind which drives them goes, falling on lands extremely far away. [27] They say that once they fell in Byzantion and so terrified the people there that from that time up to the present the whole city decided to propitiate God with prayers every year; and on another occasion they fell upon Tripolis in Libya. [28] Formerly this rumbling took place, they say, once every hundred years or more, but in later times it has happened much more frequently. [29] This, however, they declare emphatically, namely that whenever Vesuvius belches forth these ashes, the country all around is bound to flourish with an abundance of all crops. [30] Also, the air on the mountain is most thin and by its nature the best for health in the world. Indeed, those who are attacked by consumption have been sent to this place by physicians from ancient times.[579] So much, then, regarding Vesuvius.

5. At this time another army also arrived by sea from Byzantion, namely three thousand Isaurians who put in at the harbor of Naples, led by Paulos and Konon; eight hundred Thracian horsemen who landed at Otranto, led by Ioannes, the nephew of

577. For an eruption of Vesuvius during the reign of Theoderic (in 512), see Cassiodorus, *Variae* 4.50; see also 8.35.1–6 below.

578. Actually to the east.

579. Prokopios is here following Galen, *On The Therapeutic Method (De Medendi Methodo*; pp. 363–66; Kühn vol. 10), down to the variant *phthoê* for *phthisis*. The region was recommended for the medicinal quality of its air and water (Horace, *Carmina* 3.4.24; *Epistle* 1.1.83; Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.2).

Vitalianos who had formerly rebelled against the emperor;[580] and with them a thousand soldiers of the regular cavalry under various commanders including Alexandros and Markentios. [2] And it happened that Zenon with three hundred cavalry had already reached Rome by way of Samnium and the Latin Way. When Ioannes with all the others came to Campania and was provided with many wagons by the people of Calabria, his force was joined by five hundred men who, as I said, assembled in Campania. [3] These set out by the coast road with the wagons and their plan was that, if any hostile force confronted them, they would make a circle of the wagons in the form of a stockade and from there defend against their assailants; and they commanded the men under Paulos and Konon to sail with all speed and join them at Ostia, the harbor of Rome. They put sufficient grain in the wagons and loaded all the ships, not only with grain, but also with wine and all kinds of provisions. [4] They thought that they would find the forces of Martinos and Traïanos in the region of Terracina and have their company from that point on, but when they came near they learned that those forces had recently been recalled and had retired to Rome. [5] But Belisarios, learning that the forces of Ioannes were approaching and fearing that the enemy might confront them in greatly superior numbers and destroy them, took the following measures. [6] The enemy had encamped close to the Flaminia Gate, which Belisarios himself had blocked up at the beginning of this war by walling it off with stone, as has been told by me in the previous book,[581] his purpose of course being to make it difficult for the enemy either to force their way in or to make any attempt upon the city at that point. [7] Thus no engagement had taken place at this gate, and the barbarians had no suspicion that there would be any attack upon them from there. [8] Now Belisarios tore down by night the masonry that blocked this gate, without giving notice to anyone at all, and made ready the greatest part of the army there. [9] At dawn he sent Traïanos and Diogenes with a thousand cavalry through the Pinciana Gate, commanding them to shoot missiles into the camps and, as soon as their opponents came against them, to flee without the least shame and ride up to the walls at full speed. [10] He also stationed some men inside this gate. So the men under Traïanos began to harass the barbarians, as Belisarios had directed them, and the Goths, gathering from all of their camps, began to defend themselves. [11] Both armies began to move as fast as they could toward the walls of the city, the one giving the appearance of fleeing, and the other supposing that they were pursuing the enemy. [12] But as soon as Belisarios saw the enemy take up the pursuit, he opened the Flaminia Gate and sent his army out against the barbarians, who were taken unawares. [13] Now it happened that one of the Gothic camps was on the road near this gate, and in front of it there was a narrow passage between steep banks that was extremely inaccessible. [14] One of the barbarians, a man of splendid physique and wearing full armor, when he saw the enemy advancing, reached this place before them and took his

580. Vitalianos rebelled against Anastasios in the Balkans in 513–515; he was reconciled with Justin in 518, and allegedly murdered in the palace by Justinian in 520 (*Secret History* 6.27–28).
581. 5.19.16.

stand there, calling to his comrades and urging them to help him guard the narrow passage. [15] But Mundila got there first and slew him, and then would not allow any of the barbarians to use this passage. [16] The Romans therefore passed through it without encountering opposition, and some of them, arriving at the Gothic camp nearby, for a short time tried to take it, but were unable to do so because of the strength of the stockade, although not many barbarians had been left behind in it. [17] The trench had been dug to an extraordinary depth, and as the dirt taken from it had been placed along its inner side, this reached a great height and so served as a wall;[582] and it was abundantly supplied with stakes, which were sharp and close together, thus making a palisade. [18] Emboldened by these defenses, the barbarians began to repel the enemy vigorously. But a guardsman of Belisarios, Akylinos by name, an extremely energetic man, seized a horse by the bridle and, mounting it, leaped from the trench into the middle of the camp, where he slew some of the enemy. [19] When his opponents gathered around him and hurled great numbers of missiles, the horse was wounded and fell, but he himself unexpectedly made his escape through the midst of the enemy. [20] So he went on foot with his companions toward the Pinciana Gate. They overtook the barbarians who were still pursuing the Roman cavalry, and began to shoot at them from behind and were killing them. [21] When Traïanos and his men perceived this, as they had meanwhile been reinforced by the horsemen who had been standing nearby in readiness, they charged at full speed against their pursuers. [22] The Goths now, out-generaled and unexpectedly caught between the forces of their enemy, began to be killed indiscriminately. [23] There was a great slaughter of them and very few barely managed to escape to their camps; meanwhile the others, fearing for the safety of all their strongholds, shut themselves in and remained in them thereafter, thinking that the Romans would immediately come against them. [24] In this engagement one of the barbarians shot Traïanos in the face, above the right eye, not far from the nose. [25] The whole of the iron point penetrated his head and disappeared entirely, although the barb on it was large and extremely long, but the remainder of the arrow duly fell to the ground without the application of force by anyone, in my opinion because the point had never been securely fastened to the shaft. [26] Traïanos, however, paid no heed to this at all, but continued killing and pursuing the enemy. But in the fifth year after this,[583] the tip of the iron of its own accord began to project visibly from his face. [27] This is now the third year[584] since it has been slowly but steadily coming out. It is to be expected, therefore, that the whole barb will eventually come out, although not for a long time. But it has not been an impediment to the man in any way. So much then for these matters.

Dec. 537 **6.** Now the barbarians immediately began to despair of winning the war and were considering how they might withdraw from Rome, seeing as they had suffered from both the pestilence and the enemy and were now reduced from many tens of thousands to a few

582. 5.19.11.

583. I.e., in 540/541.

584. I.e., Prokopios was writing this account ca. 544.

men; not least of all, they were distressed by the famine, and while in name they were the besiegers, in fact they were besieged by their opponents and shut off from all necessities. [2] When they learned that yet another army had come to their enemy from Byzantion both by land and by sea—not being informed as to its actual size, but supposing it to be as large as the free play of rumor was able to make it—they became terrified at the danger and began to plan their departure. [3] So they sent three envoys to Rome, one of whom was a Roman of note among the Goths, and he, coming before Belisarios, spoke as follows:

dialogue between the Goths and Belisarios

[4] "Each of us knows well that the war has not turned out to the advantage of either side, as we both have had actual experience of its hardships. [5] Why should anyone in either army deny facts of which neither now remains in ignorance? [6] No one, I think, could deny, at least no one who is not a fool, that it is only unwise men who choose to go on suffering indefinitely merely to satisfy a momentary urge to fight and refuse to find a solution for the troubles that afflict them. [7] Whenever this situation arises, it is the duty of the commanders on both sides not to place their own glory ahead of the safety of their subjects, but to choose a course that is just and expedient not for themselves alone but also for their opponents, and thus to put an end to present hardships. [8] For moderation in one's demands offers a way out of all difficulties, but it is the nature of contentiousness to block the accomplishment of essential goals. [9] Now we, on our part, have deliberated about ending this war and come before you with proposals that are advantageous to both sides, in fact in them we waive, as we think, some of our rights. [10] See to it now that you likewise in your own deliberations do not give in to a spirit of contentiousness toward us and thus destroy yourselves as well as us, rather than choosing the course that will be of advantage to yourselves. [11] It is fitting that both sides state their case not in long speeches, but that each should respond to the other in quick succession, if anything said seems inappropriate.[585] [12] Thus each side will be able to say briefly whatever is on his mind, and at the same time the essential things will be accomplished."

[13] Belisarios replied: "Nothing will prevent the debate from proceeding in the way you suggest, only speak words of peace and justice."

[14] The ambassadors of the Goths in their turn said: "You have done us an injustice, Romans, in taking up arms wrongfully against us, your friends and allies.[586] What we will say is, we think, well known to each one of you as well as to ourselves. [15] For the Goths did not obtain the land of Italy by wresting it from the Romans by force, but Odoacer in former times dethroned the emperor, changed the government here to a tyranny, and held it. [16] Zenon, who then held power in the East, although he wished to avenge his partner in the imperial office and free this land from the usurper, was unable to destroy the power of Odoacer. So he persuaded Theoderic, our ruler, even though the latter was on

585. This proposal, and the debate, is based on the Melian Dialogue in Thucydides, *History* 5.84–111.

586. Cf. the Corinthians in Thucydides, *History* 1.53.2.

the point of besieging him and Byzantion, to end his hostility toward himself, remember the honor that Theoderic had already received at his hands when he was made patrician and consul of the Romans, and then to punish Odoacer for his unjust treatment of Augustulus; after that, he and the Goths would hold sway over the land as its legitimate and rightful rulers. [17] It was in this way, therefore, that we took over the dominion of Italy, and we have preserved both the laws and the republic as strictly as any who have ever been emperors of the Romans, and there is absolutely no law, either written or unwritten, introduced by Theoderic or any of his successors on the throne of the Goths.[587] [18] We have so scrupulously guarded for the Romans their practices pertaining to the worship of God and faith in him, that to this day not one of the Italians has changed his belief, either willingly or unwillingly, and when Goths have changed it, we paid no attention. [19] The sanctuaries of the Romans have received from us the highest honor. No one who has taken refuge in any of them has ever been treated with violence by anyone; not only that, the Romans themselves have continued to hold all the offices of the state, and no Goth has had a share in them. [20] Let someone come forth and refute us if he thinks that this statement of ours is not true. One might add that the Goths have conceded that the dignity of the consulship should be conferred upon Romans every year by the emperor of the East. [21] Yet even though matters stand in this way, you, on your part, did not side with Italy when it was suffering at the hands of the barbarians and Odoacer, although it was not for a short time that he treated the land outrageously, but for ten years. And now you do violence to us who have acquired it legitimately, although you have no business here. [22] So leave from here and get out of our way, keeping that which is your own and whatever you have gained by plunder."

Belisarios said: "Your promise was to speak briefly and moderately, but your speech has been long and almost arrogant. [23] Theoderic was sent by the emperor Zenon in order to make war on Odoacer, not in order to hold the dominion of Italy for himself. Why would the emperor have wanted to exchange one tyrant for another? He sent him so that Italy might be free and subject to the emperor. [24] And while he dealt well with the tyrant, in everything else he showed an excessive lack of modesty, for he never thought of restoring the land to its rightful owner. [25] But I, for my part, think it is the same whether one robs another by violence or fails to restore his neighbor's property. I will never surrender the emperor's territory to anyone else. [26] But if there is anything you want in place of it, I give you leave to speak."

[27] The barbarians said: "No one of you can be unaware that everything that we said is true. But in order that we may not seem to be contentious, we give up to you Sicily, great as it is wealthy, seeing that without it you cannot possess Libya in security."

587. The claim that the Goths preserved all the laws of the Romans is made also by Cassiodorus, *Variae* 1.1.

> [28] And Belisarios: "We on our side permit the Goths to have the whole of Britain, which is much larger than Sicily and was subject to the Romans in early times. [29] For it is only fair to make an equal return to those who first do a good deed or make a concession."
>
> [30] "If we put Campania also on the table, or Naples itself, will you not listen?"
>
> [31] "We are not empowered to administer the emperor's affairs in a way that does not accord with his wishes."
>
> "Not even if we impose on ourselves the payment of a fixed sum of money every year?"
>
> [32] "Not even then. For we are not authorized to do anything else than guard the land for its owner."
>
> [33] "Well then, we must send envoys to the emperor and make a treaty with him concerning the whole matter. A definite time must also be appointed during which the armies will be bound to observe an armistice."
>
> [34] "So be it; let this be done. I will never stand in your way when you are making plans for peace."

[35] After saying these things they each left the meeting, and the envoys of the Goths withdrew to their own camp. [36] During the ensuing days they visited each other frequently and made arrangements for the armistice, and they agreed that each side would hand over to the other side some of its notable men as hostages to ensure the armistice.

7. While these matters were being negotiated there, the fleet of the Isaurians put in at the harbor of the Romans and Ioannes with his men came to Ostia, and not one of the enemy hindered them either while they were bringing their ships to land or making camp. [2] But in order that they might be able to pass the night safe from a sudden attack by the enemy, the Isaurians dug a deep trench close to the harbor and kept a constant guard in shifts, while Ioannes' soldiers made a barricade of their wagons around the camp, and remained quiet. [3] When night came on Belisarios went to Ostia with a hundred cavalry, and after recounting what had taken place in the engagement and the agreement between the Romans and the Goths and generally encouraging them, he instructed them to bring their cargoes and come with all zeal to Rome. "I will ensure that the road is free from danger," he said. [4] So he himself at early dawn rode back to the city, and Antonina with the commanders began at dawn to consider means of transporting the cargo. [5] It seemed to them that the task was a hard one and beset with the greatest difficulties. For the oxen could hold out no longer, but all lay around half dead and, furthermore, it was dangerous to travel along a rather narrow road with the wagons and impossible to tow the barges on the river, as was formerly the custom. [6] The road on the left of the river was held by the enemy, as stated by me in the previous book,[588] and not available for use by the Romans at that time, while the road on the other side is altogether unusable, at least the part of it that follows the riverbank. [7]

588. 5.26.12–14.

They therefore selected the small boats belonging to the larger ships, put a fence of high planks around them on all sides, in order that the men on board might not be exposed to the enemy's shots, and embarked archers and sailors on them in numbers suitable for each boat. [8] After they had loaded the boats with all the freight they could carry, they waited for a favorable wind and set sail toward Rome by the Tiber, and part of the army followed them along the right bank of the river to support them. [9] But they left many Isaurians to guard the ships. Now where the course of the river [is straight], they had no trouble in sailing, simply raising the sails of the boats; but where the stream winds and takes a course across the wind, the sails received no impulse from it and the sailors had to struggle greatly to row and force the boats against the current. [10] As for the barbarians, they sat in their camps and had no wish to hinder the enemy, either because they were terrified at the danger or they thought that the Romans would never by such means succeed in bringing in any provisions, and considered it contrary to their own interest, when a matter of no consequence was involved, to frustrate their hope of the armistice that Belisarios had promised. [11] Moreover, the Goths at Portus, although they could see their enemy constantly sailing by almost close enough to touch, made no move against them, but sat there wondering in amazement at their plan. [12] When the Romans had made the voyage up the river many times in that way, and had conveyed all the cargoes into the city without interference, the sailors took the ships and departed with all speed, for it was already about the time of the winter solstice; and the rest of the army entered Rome, except that Paulos remained in Ostia with some of the Isaurians.

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[13] Afterward they exchanged hostages to secure the armistice, the Romans giving Zenon and the Goths Wilia, a distinguished man, with the understanding that for three months they would make no attack upon each another, until the envoys returned from Byzantion and reported the emperor's will. [14] Even if one side or the other did initiate offenses against their opponents, the envoys were still to be returned to their own people. [15] So the barbarian envoys went to Byzantion escorted by Romans,[589] and Hildiger, the son-in-law of Antonina, came to Rome from Libya with many horsemen. [16] The Goths who were holding the stronghold at Portus abandoned the place by the order of Vittigis because their supplies were exhausted, and they were summoned back to the camp. Whereupon Paulos with his Isaurians came from Ostia, took it over, and held it. [17] The chief reason why these barbarians were without provisions was that the Romans commanded the sea and did not allow any supplies to be brought in to them. [18] It was for this reason that they also abandoned at about the same time a coastal city of importance, Centumcellae by name,[590] that is, because they were short of provisions. [19] This city is large and populous, lying to the west of Rome in Tuscany, distant from it about 280 stades. [20] After taking possession of it the Romans extended their power still more, for they took also the town of Albano, which lies to the east of Rome, as the enemy had evacuated it at that time for the same reason, and so they had now surrounded the barbarians on all sides and held them between their forces.

589. This embassy may have conveyed Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.32 (Vittigis to Justinian).

590. Modern Civitavecchia.

[21] The Goths, therefore, were in a mood to break the agreement and do some harm to the Romans. So they sent envoys to Belisarios and claimed that they had been unjustly treated during a truce, [22] for when Vittigis had summoned the Goths who were in Portus to perform some service for him, Paulos and the Isaurians had seized and taken over the fort there for no good reason. [23] They made this same specious charge regarding Albano and Centumcellae, and threatened that, unless he gave these places back to them, they would hold it against him. [24] But Belisarios laughed and sent them away, saying that this charge was but a pretext and no one was ignorant why the Goths had abandoned these places. [25] Thereafter the two sides were somewhat suspicious of each other. But later, when Belisarios saw that Rome was abundantly supplied with soldiers, he sent many horsemen to places distant from Rome, and commanded Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, and the cavalry under his command, eight hundred in number, to pass the winter near the city of Alba, which lies in Picenum; [26] and he sent with him four hundred of Valerianos' men, who were commanded by Damianos, the nephew of Valerianos, and eight hundred of his own guardsmen who were especially able warriors. [27] In command of these he put two spearmen, Sountas and Adegis, and ordered them to follow Ioannes wherever he led them. He gave Ioannes instructions that as long as he saw that the enemy were keeping the agreement between them, he should remain quiet; but whenever he found that the armistice had been violated by them, he should do as follows. [28] With his whole force he was to make a sudden raid and overrun the land of Picenum, visiting all the districts of that region and reaching each one before the report of his coming. [29] For in this whole land there was virtually not a single man left, as it seemed that all of them had marched against Rome, but everywhere there were women and children of the enemy and money. [30] He was instructed to enslave or plunder whatever he found, taking care never to injure any of the Romans living there. [31] And if he happened upon any place with men and defenses, as he probably would, he was to make an attempt upon it with his whole force. [32] If he was able to capture it, he was then to advance, but if it so happened that his attempt was unsuccessful, he was to march back or remain there. [33] For if he were to go forward and leave such a fortress in his rear, he would be placed in the greatest danger, as they would never be able to defend themselves easily if they were harassed by their opponents. He was to keep all the booty intact, so that it could be divided fairly and properly among the army. [34] Then with a laugh he added this also: "It would not be fair for the drones to be destroyed with great effort only to have others, who did not endure any hardship at all, enjoy the honey." So after giving these instructions, Belisarios sent Ioannes with his army.

[35] At about the same time Datius, the priest of Milan, and some notable men among the citizens came to Rome and begged Belisarios to send them a few guards. [36] For they declared that these guards would be able without any trouble to detach from the Goths not only Milan but the whole of Liguria also, and to recover them for the emperor. [37] This city is situated in Liguria, and lies about halfway between the city of Ravenna and the Alps on the borders of Gaul, [38] for from either one it is a journey of eight days to Milan for an active traveler; and it is the first of the cities of the west after Rome, in size, population, and prosperity. Belisarios promised to fulfill their request, but detained them there during the winter season. *winter 537–538*

8. Such was the course of these events. But the malicious envy of fortune was already swelling against the Romans, when she saw their affairs progressing successfully and well, and, wishing to mix some evil into them, she inspired a quarrel, on a trifling pretext, between Belisarios and Konstantinos; and I will now relate how this grew and how it ended. [2] There was a certain Presidius, a distinguished Roman living at Ravenna. This Presidius had given offense to the Goths when Vittigis was about to march against Rome and so he set out with a few of his servants ostensibly on a hunt, and he fled. He had communicated his plan to no one and took none of his property with him, except that he himself carried two daggers, the scabbards of which happened to be adorned with much gold and precious stones. When he came to Spoleto, he lodged in a certain temple outside the walls. [3] When Konstantinos, who happened to be still in the region,[591] heard of this, he sent one of his guardsmen, Maxentiolos, and took from him both the daggers for no good reason. [4] The man was deeply offended by what had taken place and set out for Rome with all speed and came to Belisarios; Konstantinos also arrived there not long after, for the Gothic army was already reported to be not far away. [5] Now as long as the affairs of the Romans were critical and in confusion, Presidius remained silent; but when he saw that the Romans were gaining the upper hand and that the envoys of the Goths had been sent to the emperor, as I said above,[592] he frequently approached Belisarios reporting the injustice and demanding that he assist him in obtaining his rights. [6] And Belisarios reproached Konstantinos many times himself and many times through others, urging him to clear himself of an unjust deed and a dishonorable reputation. [7] But Konstantinos—for it was fated to go badly for him—always lightly evaded the charge and taunted the wronged man. [8] On one occasion Presidius met Belisarios riding on horseback in the forum, and he took hold of the horse's bridle and, crying out with a loud voice, asked whether the laws of the emperor said that, whenever anyone fleeing from the barbarians comes to them as a suppliant, they should rob him by violence of whatever he had in his hands. [9] Though many men gathered around and commanded him with threats to let go of the bridle, he did not let go until at last Belisarios promised to give him the daggers. [10] On the next day, therefore, Belisarios called Konstantinos and many commanders to an apartment in the palace and, after going over what had happened on the previous day, urged him even at that late time to restore the daggers. [11] But Konstantinos refused to do so; in fact, he would more gladly throw them into the waters of the Tiber than give them to Presidius. [12] Belisarios, being now overcome by anger, asked whether Konstantinos did not think that he was subject to his orders. And he agreed to obey him in all other things, for this was the emperor's will, but this command, which he was laying upon him at the present time, he would never obey. [13] Belisarios then commanded his guardsmen to enter, whereupon Konstantinos said: "Plainly, in order to have them kill me." "By no means," said Belisarios, "but so that they can compel your guardsman

591. 5.16.1.

592. 6.7.15.

Maxentiolos, who forcibly took the daggers for you, to restore to the man what he took from him by violence." [14] Konstantinos, thinking that he was to die that very instant, wished to do some great deed before he suffered anything himself. [15] So he drew the dagger that hung by his thigh and thrust it suddenly at the belly of Belisarios. And he in astonishment jumped back and by throwing his arms around Bessas, who was standing near, managed to avoid the blow. [16] Konstantinos, still boiling with anger, went after him, but Hildiger and Valerianos, seeing what was happening, grabbed his hands, one of the right and the other of the left, and pulled him back. [17] At this point the guardsmen entered whom Belisarios had summoned a moment before, removed the dagger of Konstantinos from his hand with great violence, and seized him amid a great uproar. At the moment they did him no harm, out of respect, I suppose, to the officers present, but led him away to another room at the command of Belisarios, and at a later time put him to death. [18] This was the only unholy deed done by Belisarios, and it was in no way worthy of his character, for he always showed great gentleness in his treatment of all others. But it had to be, as I have said, that Konstantinos should come to a bad end.[593]

9. The Goths not long after this wished to strike a blow at the walls of Rome. First they sent some men by night into one of the aqueducts, from which they themselves had removed the water at the beginning of this war.[594] [2] With lamps and torches in their hands they tested how to enter the city this way. Now it happened that not far from the small Pinciana Gate an arch of this aqueduct had a sort of crevice in it, [3] and one of the guards saw the light through this and told his companions; but they said that he had seen a wolf passing by there. [4] For at that point it happened that the structure of the aqueduct did not rise high above the ground, and they thought that the guard had imagined the wolf's eyes to be fire. [5] So those barbarians who explored the aqueduct, upon reaching the middle of the city, where there was an upward passage built of old leading to the palace itself, came upon some masonry there which allowed them neither to advance beyond that point nor to use the ascent at all. [6] This masonry had been put in there by Belisarios as a precaution at the beginning of this siege, as I explained in a previous book.[595] [7] So they decided to remove a small stone from the wall and then to go back immediately, and when they returned to Vittigis they displayed the stone and told him everything. [8] While he was planning his attack with the leading Goths, the Romans who were on guard at the Pinciana Gate recalled among themselves the next day their suspicion about the wolf. [9] But when the story was passed around and came to Belisarios, the general did not treat the matter carelessly but immediately sent some of the notable men in the army, together with the spearman Diogenes, down into the aqueduct with orders to investigate everything quickly. [10] They found all along the

593. In the *Secret History* (1.24–30), Prokopios claims that Antonina pressured Belisarios to execute Konstantinos because of a comment that he had made about her infidelity.

594. 5.19.13.

595. 5.19.18.

aqueduct the lamps of the enemy and the ashes dropped from their torches, and, after examining the masonry where the stone had been taken out by the Goths, they reported back to Belisarios. [11] For this reason he kept the aqueduct under close guard, and the Goths, perceiving this, desisted from this attempt.

[12] But later on the barbarians even planned an open attack against the walls. So they waited for lunchtime and, bringing up ladders and fire, when their enemy were least expecting them, made an assault upon the small Pinciana Gate, emboldened by the hope of capturing the city by a sudden attack, as not many soldiers had been left there. [13] But it happened that Hildiger and his men were keeping guard at that time; for each were assigned by turns to guard duty. [14] So when he saw the enemy advancing in disorder, he went out against them before they were yet drawn up in a line of battle and were still advancing in disarray. Routing those who were opposite him without trouble, he slew many. [15] As was only to be expected, a great outcry and commotion arose throughout the city and the Romans gathered as quickly as possible to all parts of the walls, so the barbarians after a short time went back to their camp having accomplished nothing. [16] But Vittigis resorted again to a plot against the wall. There was a certain part of it that was especially vulnerable, where the bank of the Tiber is, because at this place the Romans of old, confident in the protection afforded by the stream, had built the wall negligently, making it low and without towers. Vittigis hoped to capture the city easily from there. Nor was there even a garrison there of any consequence, as it happened. [17] He therefore bribed with money two Romans who lived near the church of Peter the Apostle to pass by the guards there at nightfall carrying a skin full of wine and, in some way or other, by making a show of friendship, to give it to them and then to sit drinking with them well into the night; and they were to throw into the cup of each guard a sleep-inducing drug that Vittigis had given them. [18] And he stealthily prepared some skiffs, which he kept on the other bank. As soon as the guards were overcome by sleep, some of the barbarians would be given the signal to cross the river in these, taking ladders, and make an assault on the wall. [19] He made ready the entire army with the intention of capturing the whole city by storm. [20] After these arrangements were complete, one of the two men suborned by Vittigis for this service (for it was not fated that Rome should be captured by this army of the Goths) came of his own accord to Belisarios and revealed everything, and told who the other man was. [21] So this man under torture brought to light all that he was about to do and produced the drug that Vittigis had given him. [22] Belisarios mutilated his nose and ears and sent him riding on an ass into the enemy's camp. [23] When the barbarians saw him, they realized that God would not allow their plans to bear fruit, and therefore the city would never be captured by them.

10. While these things were happening, Belisarios wrote to Ioannes and commanded him to begin operations. With his two thousand cavalry, he began to go around the land of Picenum and plunder everything before him, enslaving the women and children of the enemy. [2] When Ulitheus, the uncle of Vittigis, confronted him with an army of Goths,

he defeated them in battle and killed Ulitheus himself and almost the whole army of the enemy. [3] For this reason no one dared any longer to engage with him.[596] But when he came to the city of Osimo, he learned that it contained a Gothic garrison of inconsiderable size, yet in other respects he observed that the place was strong and impossible to capture. [4] For this reason he was unwilling to besiege it, but departing from there as quickly as he could, he moved forward. [5] He did the same thing at the city of Urbino, but at *Mar. 538* Rimini, which is a day's journey from Ravenna, he marched into the city at the invitation of the Romans. [6] Now all the barbarians who were keeping guard there were suspicious of the Roman inhabitants and, as soon as they learned that this army was approaching, they departed and ran until they reached Ravenna. [7] Thus Ioannes secured Rimini, having left in his rear a garrison of the enemy both at Osimo and at Urbino, not because he had forgotten the commands of Belisarios nor because he was carried away by irrational boldness, for he had wisdom as well as energy, but because he reasoned (correctly, as it turned out) that if the Goths learned that the Roman army was close to Ravenna, they would instantly break up the siege of Rome fearing for this place. [8] In fact his reasoning proved to be true, for as soon as Vittigis and the army of the Goths heard that Rimini was held by him, they were plunged into great fear regarding Ravenna and, considering nothing else at all, immediately made their withdrawal, as I will presently recount. [9] Ioannes won great fame from this deed, although he was renowned even before. [10] He was a daring and efficient man in the highest degree, unflinching before danger, and in his daily life showing at all times an austerity and ability to endure hardship unsurpassed by any barbarian or common soldier. Such a man was Ioannes. [11] Now Matasuntha, the wife of Vittigis, who was extremely hostile to her husband because he had taken her to wife by violence from the beginning,[597] upon learning that Ioannes had come to Rimini was absolutely overcome by joy; she sent a messenger to him and opened secret negotiations concerning marriage and the betrayal of the city.

[12] These two kept sending messengers to each other without the knowledge of the others and were negotiating. But when the Goths learned what had happened at Rimini, and when at the same time all their provisions were exhausted and the three months' time had already expired, they began to make their withdrawal, although they had not as yet received any information as far as the envoys were concerned. [13] Now it was about the spring equinox, and one year and nine days had been spent in the siege *spring 538* when the Goths burned all their camps and set out at daybreak. [14] The Romans, seeing their opponents in retreat, were at a loss how to deal with the situation. For it happened that the majority of the cavalry were not present at that time, having been sent to various places, as I said above,[598] and they did not think that by themselves they were a match for so great a multitude of the enemy. Still, Belisarios armed all the infantry and

596. Before reaching Osimo, Ioannes captured Aternum (modern Pescara) and Ortona (Continuer of Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 537/538).

597. 5.11.27.

598. 6.7.25.

cavalry. [15] And when he saw that more than half of the enemy had crossed the bridge, he led the army out through the small Pinciana Gate, and the hand-to-hand battle that ensued proved to be equal to any that had preceded it. [16] At the beginning the barbarians withstood their enemy vigorously, and many on both sides fell in the first clash; but then the Goths turned to flight and brought upon themselves a great and overwhelming disaster, [17] for each man for himself was rushing to cross the bridge first. As a result, they became very crowded and suffered most cruelly, for they were being killed both by each other and the enemy. [18] Many, too, fell off the bridge on either side into the Tiber, sank in their armor, and perished. Finally, after losing in this way most of their number, the remainder joined those who had crossed before. [19] Longinos the Isaurian and Mundila, the spearmen of Belisarios, especially excelled in this battle. But while Mundila, after engaging with four barbarians in turn and killing them all, was himself saved, [20] Longinos, having proved himself the chief cause of the enemy rout, fell where he fought, leaving the Roman army great regret for his loss.

11. Vittigis with the remainder of his army marched to Ravenna, and he strengthened the fortified places with many guards, leaving one thousand men in Chiusi, the city of Tuscany, with Gibimer as commander, and in Orvieto an equal number, over whom he set Albila, a Goth, as commander; and he left Uligisalus in Todi with four hundred men. [2] In the land of Picenum he left in the fortress of Petra four hundred men who had lived there previously, and in Osimo, which is the largest of all the cities of that country, he left four thousand Goths selected for their valor and a very energetic commander, Visandus by name, and two thousand men under Mora in the city of Urbino. [3] There are also two other fortresses, Cesena and Monteferetra, in each of which he established a garrison of not less than five hundred men. Then he himself with the rest of the army moved straight for Rimini intending to besiege it. [4] But it happened that Belisarios, as soon as the Goths had broken up the siege of Rome, had sent Hildiger and Martinos with a thousand horsemen, in order that by traveling more quickly by another road they might arrive at Rimini first, and he directed them promptly to evacuate Ioannes from the city and all those with him, and to put in their place fully enough men to guard the city, taking them from a fortress which is on the Adriatic Sea, Ancona by name, two days' journey distant from Rimini. [5] For he had already taken possession of it not long before, having sent Konon with a large force of Isaurians and Thracians. [6] He hoped that if infantry alone under commanders of no great note held Rimini, the Gothic forces would never undertake its siege but would regard it with contempt and so go at once to Ravenna, but that if they did want to besiege Rimini, the provisions there would suffice for the infantry for a somewhat longer time; [7] and he thought also that two thousand horsemen, attacking from outside with the rest of the army, would in all probability do the enemy great harm and drive them more easily to abandon the siege. [8] It was with this purpose that Belisarios gave those orders to Martinos and Hildiger and their men. And they, by traveling by the Flaminian Way, arrived long before the barbarians. [9] For the Goths were advancing in a more leisurely manner in a great throng, and they

were compelled to make long detours, both because of the lack of provisions and also because they preferred not to pass close to the fortresses on the Flaminian Way, Narni and Spoleto and Perugia, for these were in the hands of the enemy, as I stated above.[599]

[10] When the Roman army arrived at Petra, they made an attack on the fortress there, regarding it as incidental to their objective. Now this fortress was not devised by man but was made by the nature of the place; for the road passes through an extremely mountainous country at that place.[600] [11] On the right of this road descends a river that no man can ford because of the swiftness of the current, whereas not far away on the left rises a sheer rock that reaches to such a height that men who happen to be standing on its summit, as seen by those below, are like the smallest birds in size. [12] In ancient times there was no passage through, for the end of the rock reaches to the very stream of the river, affording no passage through to travelers. [13] So the men of ancient times constructed a tunnel at that point and a gate for the place.[601] [14] They also closed up the greater part of the other entrance, leaving only enough space for a small gate there also, and thus rendered the place a natural fortress, which they call by the fitting name of Petra. [15] So the men of Martinos and Hildiger first made an attack on one of the two gates and shot many missiles, but they accomplished nothing, although the barbarians hardly made a defense at all. But afterward they forced their way up the cliff behind the fortress and hurled stones from there upon the heads of the Goths. [16] And the latter, hurriedly and in great confusion, entered their houses and remained quiet. Then the Romans, being unable to hit any of the enemy with the stones they threw, devised the following. [17] They broke off large pieces from the cliff and, many of them pushing together, hurled them down, aiming at the houses. [18] Wherever these in their fall just grazed the building, they gave the whole a considerable shock and put the barbarians in great fear. [19] Consequently the Goths stretched out their hands to those who were still by the gate and surrendered themselves and the fort, on condition that they remain free from harm, being slaves of the emperor and subject to Belisarios. [20] Hildiger and Martinos removed most of them and led them away, putting them on a basis of complete equality with themselves, but a few they left there together with their wives and children. They also left a small garrison of Romans. [21] From there they proceeded to Ancona and, taking with them many of the infantry in that place, reached Rimini on the third day and announced the will of Belisarios. [22] But Ioannes was not only unwilling to follow them himself, he wanted to keep Damianos with the four hundred. So they left the infantry there and departed with all speed, taking the spearmen and guardsmen of Belisarios.

12. Not long afterward Vittigis and his whole army arrived at Rimini, where they established their camp and began the siege. They immediately constructed a wooden tower

599. 5.17.3.

600. Petra Pertusa ("the tunneled rock") on the Via Flaminia, modern Gola (or Passo) di Furlo.

601. The Roman pass was opened by the emperor Vespanian, as an inscription on the site attests.

higher than the circuit-wall of the city and resting on four wheels, and drew it toward the part of the wall that seemed to them most vulnerable. [2] But in order not to have the same experience here that they had before the walls of Rome, they did not use oxen to draw the tower but hid themselves within it and hauled it forward. [3] There was a stairway of great breadth inside the tower by which the barbarians were to make the ascent easily and in great numbers, for they hoped that as soon as they placed the tower against the fortifications, they would have no trouble in stepping from it to the battlements of the wall; for they had made the tower high with this in view. [4] So when they had come close to the fortifications with this siege engine, they remained quiet for a while, as it was already growing dark. Stationing guards by the tower they all went off to pass the night, not expecting to meet with any obstacle whatever. [5] Indeed there was nothing in their way, not even a trench between them and the wall, except a very small one. As for the Romans, they passed the night in great fear, supposing that on the next day they would perish. [6] But Ioannes neither yielded to despair in the face of this danger nor was agitated by fear, and he devised the following plan. Leaving the others on guard at their posts, he himself took the Isaurians, who carried pickaxes and other tools of this kind, and went outside the fortifications; it was late at night and no word had been given beforehand to anyone in the city. Once outside the wall, he commanded his men in silence to dig the trench deeper. [7] So they did as directed, and as they dug they put the earth that they took out of the trench on the side of it nearer the city wall, and there it served them as an earthwork. [8] As they were unobserved for a long time by the enemy, who were sleeping, they soon made the trench both deep and sufficiently wide, at the place where the fortifications were especially vulnerable and where the barbarians intended to make the assault with their siege engine. [9] But far on in the night the enemy, perceiving what was being done, charged at full speed against those who were digging, and Ioannes went inside the fortifications with the Isaurians, as the trench was now in good shape. [10] At dawn Vittigis understood what had been done and, overcome by anger at it, executed some of the guards; however, he was just as eager as before to bring his engine to bear and so commanded the Goths to throw logs as quickly as possible into the trench, and then by drawing the tower over them to bring it into position. [11] They did as Vittigis commanded with zeal, although their opponents kept fighting them back from the wall with the utmost vigor. But when the weight of the tower came upon the logs they naturally bent and sank down. [12] For this reason the barbarians were unable to advance with the engine, for the ground became even steeper before them, where the Romans had heaped up the earth as I have stated. [13] Fearing, therefore, that when night came on the enemy would sally forth and set fire to the engine, they began to draw it back again. [14] This was precisely what Ioannes was eager to prevent with all his power, so he armed his soldiers, called them all together, and exhorted them as follows:

Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, to his men

[15] My men, who share this danger with us, if it would please any one of you to live on and see those whom he has left at home, let him realize that the only hope he has of obtaining those things lies solely in his own hands. [16] For when Belisarios sent us forth in the beginning, hope and desire for many things made us eager for the task. [17] We never suspected that we would be besieged on a

> coastal location, given that the Romans command the sea so completely, nor would one have supposed that the emperor's army would have neglected us to such an extent. [18] But apart from this, at that time we were spurred to boldness by the opportunity to display our loyalty to the republic and by the glory that we would gain in the sight of all men as a result of our struggles. [19] But as things stand now, we cannot even survive except by courage, and we are obliged to undergo this danger with no other purpose than to save our own lives. [20] Therefore, if any of you claim to be valiant, you now have the opportunity, if ever it existed, to prove yourselves brave men and so cover yourselves with glory. [21] For they achieve a glorious reputation, not who overpower men weaker than themselves, but who, although inferior in equipment, still win the victory by the greatness of their souls. [22] As for those in whom love of life has been more deeply implanted, it will be of advantage to them especially to be bold, for it is true of all men, as a general thing, that when their fortunes stand on the razor's edge, as is now the case with us, they may be saved only by scorning danger.

[23] With these words Ioannes led his army out against the enemy, leaving a few men on the battlement. [24] But the enemy withstood them bravely and the battle became extremely fierce. With great difficulty and late in the day the barbarians succeeded in bringing the tower back to their own camp. [25] However, they lost so many of their fighting men that they decided to make no further attacks on the wall but, in despair of succeeding that way, they remained quiet, expecting their enemy to yield to them under stress of famine. For all their provisions had already failed them completely, as they had not found any reliable source from which to bring them in.

[26] Such was the course of events there. As for Belisarios, he sent a thousand men to the representatives of Milan, Isaurians and Thracians. [27] The Isaurians were commanded by Ennes, the Thracians by Paulos, while Mundila was set over them all and commanded in person, having a few of the guardsmen of Belisarios. With them was also Fidelius, who had been made praetorian prefect. [28] As he was a native of Milan, he was regarded as a suitable person to go with this army, for he had some influence in Liguria. [29] So they set sail from the harbor of Rome and put in at Genoa, which is the last city in Tuscany and well situated for the voyage to Gaul and Spain. [30] There they left their ships and advanced by traveling overland, placing the boats of the ships on their wagons, in order that nothing prevent their crossing the river Po. [31] It was by this means that they crossed the river. When they reached the city of Pavia, after crossing the Po, the Goths came out against them and engaged them in battle. [32] They were not only numerous but also excellent soldiers, as all the barbarians who lived in that region had deposited the most valuable of their possessions in Pavia, for it was a place with strong defenses and they had placed there a considerable garrison. [33] So a fierce battle took place, but the Romans were victorious and, routing their opponents, they slew a great number and almost captured the city in the pursuit. It was only with difficulty that the barbarians succeeded in shutting the gates, so closely did the enemy press upon them. [34] As the Romans were marching away, Fidelius went into a temple there to pray, and was the last to leave. But by some chance his horse stumbled and

he fell. [35] As he had fallen near the fortifications, the Goths saw him and came out and killed him without being observed by the enemy. When this was later discovered by Mundila and the Romans, they were greatly distressed. [36] Leaving Pavia, they arrived at the city of Milan and secured it with the rest of Liguria without a battle. [37] When Vittigis learned about this, he sent a large army with all speed and Uraïa, his own nephew, as commander. [38] Meanwhile Theudebert, the ruler of the Franks, sent him at his request ten thousand men as allies, not of the Franks themselves but of the Burgundians, in order not to appear to be harming the emperor's cause. [39] It was given out that the Burgundians had come willingly and of their own choice, not by obeying the orders of Theudebert. Joined by these soldiers, the Goths came to Milan, made camp, and began a siege when the Romans were least expecting them. At any rate the Romans, through this action, were unable to bring in any kind of provision but were immediately in distress because of the scarcity of supplies. [40] The soldiers were not even guarding the walls, for it so happened that Mundila had occupied all the cities near Milan that had defenses, namely Bergamo, Como, and Novara, as well as some other strongholds, and in every place he had established a considerable garrison, while he with about three hundred men remained in Milan, and with him Ennes and Paulos. [41] Consequently and by necessity the inhabitants of the city were regularly keeping guard in turn. Such was the progress of events in Liguria, and the winter drew to its close, and the third year came to an end in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[602]

538 **13.** At about the time of the summer solstice, Belisarios marched against Vittigis and the Gothic army, leaving a few men to garrison Rome but taking all the others with him. [2] He sent some men to Todi and Chiusi with orders to make fortified camps there, and he intended to follow them and assist in besieging the barbarians at those places. [3] But when the barbarians learned that the army was approaching, they did not wait to face the danger but sent envoys to Belisarios promising to surrender both themselves and the two cities on condition that they remain free from harm. When he arrived, they fulfilled their promise. [4] He removed all the Goths from these towns and sent them to Sicily and Naples, and, after establishing garrisons in Chiusi and Todi, he led his army forward. [5] But meanwhile Vittigis had sent another army to Osimo under the command of Vacimus with orders to join forces with the Goths there, go with them against the enemy in Ancona, and make an attempt upon that fortress. [6] Now Ancona is a sort of angled rock, from which it has received its name; for it is very much like an "angle." [7] It is about eighty stades distant from the city of Osimo, whose port it is. The defenses of the fortress lie upon the angled rock in a position of security, but all the buildings outside, although they are many, have since ancient times been unprotected by a wall. [8] Now as soon as Konon, who was in command of the garrison of the place, heard that the forces of Vacimus were coming against him and were already not far away, he revealed an irrational mindset. [9] Thinking it too small a thing to merely

602. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 537 to spring 538.

preserve free from harm the fortress and its inhabitants together with the soldiers, he left the fortifications entirely empty of soldiers and, leading them all out to a distance of about five stades, arrayed them in a battle line, yet without making the phalanx a deep one at all, but thin enough to surround the entire base of the mountain, as if for a hunt. [10] When his men saw that the enemy were greatly superior to them in number, they turned their backs and immediately fled to the fortress. [11] The barbarians, following close upon them, slew most of them on the spot, who did not manage to get inside the circuit-wall in time, and then placed ladders against the wall and attempted the ascent. Some also began burning the houses outside the fortress. [12] The Romans who had lived previously in the fortress were terror-stricken at what was taking place and at first opened the small gate and received the soldiers in as they fled in complete disorder. [13] But when they saw the barbarians close at hand and pressing upon the fugitives, fearing that they would charge in with them, they closed the gates as quickly as they could and, by letting ropes down from the battlement, saved a number by drawing them up, including Konon himself. [14] But the barbarians scaled the wall by means of the ladders and almost captured the fortress by storm; they would have succeeded if two men had not performed remarkable deeds by valiantly pushing off the battlements those who had already climbed upon the wall; one was a spearman of Belisarios, a Thracian named Ulimuth, and the other a spearman of Valerianos named Gubulgudu, a Massagete by birth. [15] These two had happened by some chance to come by ship to Ancona a little before; and in this struggle, by defending with their swords against those who were scaling the wall, they saved the fortress against expectation, but they themselves were carried from the battlement half dead, their whole bodies hacked with many wounds.

[16] At that time it was reported to Belisarios that Narses had come with a great army from Byzantion and was in Picenum. This Narses was a eunuch and steward of the imperial treasury, but he was generally keen and more energetic than would be expected of a eunuch. [17] Five thousand soldiers followed him, of whom several units were commanded by different men, among them Ioustinos, the general of Illyria, and another Narses, who had previously come to the land of the Romans as a deserter from the Armenians who are subject to the Persians; and with him had come his brother Aratios, who, as it happened, had joined Belisarios a little earlier with another army.[603] [18] About two thousand of the Herul nation also followed him, under the command of Visandus, Aluith, and Fanitheus.

14. I turn now to explain who in the world the Heruls are and how they made an alliance with the Romans.[604] They used to live beyond the Danube river from ancient

603. 1.12.22, 1.15.31.

604. The Heruls (or Heruli) were an East Germanic people whose name is related to the words *earl* and *jarl*, presumably an honorary warrior rank. Groups bearing this name had attacked the empire in the third century, sacking Byzantion and Athens. Jordanes, *Getica* 23, says that they originated in Scandinavia and received their name from their tall stature, but at 117–18 he says it was because they lived north of the Sea of Azov in some swamps, called *hêlê* in Greek.

times and worshipped a great host of gods, whom it seemed to them holy to appease even by human sacrifices. [2] They observed many customs that were not consistent with those of other men. For they were not permitted to live on either when they grew old or when they fell sick, but as soon as one of them was overtaken by old age or by sickness, it became necessary for him to ask his relatives to remove him from the world as quickly as possible. [3] They would then pile up much wood to a great height and lay the man on top of the wood, and then they would send one of the Heruls—but not a relative—to his side with a dagger; [4] for it was not lawful for a kinsman to be his slayer. When the slayer of their relative had returned, they would immediately burn the whole pile of wood, beginning at the edges. [5] When the fire died down, they collected the bones on the spot and buried them in the earth. [6] When a Herul man died, it was necessary for his wife, if she claimed any virtue and wished to leave a fair name behind her, to die not long afterward beside the tomb of her husband by hanging herself with a rope. [7] If she did not do this, she would have a bad reputation thereafter and be at odds with the relatives of her husband. Such were the customs observed by the Heruls in ancient times.

[8] As time went on they became superior in both power and numbers to all the barbarians who lived around them and, as was natural, they attacked and vanquished each of them and kept plundering their possessions by force. [9] Finally, they made the Lombards, who were Christians, along with some other nations, subject and tributary to themselves, a thing that was not customary among the barbarians of that region; but
491 the Heruls were led to it by love of money and arrogance. [10] But when Anastasios took over the Roman empire, the Heruls, having no more people to attack, laid down their arms and remained quiet, and they kept peace in this way for three years. [11] The people themselves were annoyed at this and began to abuse their leader Rodulf without
493 restraint: going to him constantly they called him cowardly and effeminate, and railed at him in a most unruly manner, taunting him with other insults too. [12] Rodulf, unable to bear the insult, marched against the Lombards, who were doing no wrong, without charging them with any fault or alleging any violation of their agreement, but bringing upon them a war that had no real cause.[605] [13] When the Lombards got word of this, they sent to Rodulf to inquire and demanded that he state the charge on account of which the Heruls were coming against them in arms; they conceded that if they had held back from the Heruls any of the tribute, then they would instantly pay it with large interest; and if their grievance was that only a moderate tribute had been imposed on them, then the Lombards would not hesitate to make it larger. [14] Such were the offers the envoys made, but Rodulf with a threat sent them away and marched forward. They

605. Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* 1.20, says that this war was caused by an altercation between Rodulf's brother and the sister of the Lombard king, which ended in the brother's murder (the Lombard king was named Tato). Jordanes, *Getica* 24, says that Rodulf fled and sought the protection of Theoderic; Theoderic adopted an (unnamed) Herul king between 507 and 511 (Cassiodorus, *Variae* 4.2), hence some historians date this battle to 507 or 512, but it could have been another man.

again sent other envoys to him about the same matter and supplicated him with many entreaties. [15] When the second envoys had fared in the same way, a third embassy came to him and absolutely forbade the Heruls to bring upon them a war without any excuse. [16] For if they came against them with such a purpose, they too, not willingly, but under the direst necessity, would array themselves against their assailants, calling upon God as their witness, the slightest sign of whose favor could turn the scales and was a match for all the strength of men. God would likely be moved by the causes of the war and would determine the issue of the fight for both sides accordingly. [17] So they spoke, thinking in this way to terrify their assailants, but the Heruls, unscrupulous in all ways, decided to meet the Lombards in battle. [18] When the two armies came close to one another, it so happened that the sky above the Lombards was obscured by a sort of cloud, black and thick, but above the Heruls it was extremely clear. [19] Judging by this, one would have conjectured that the Heruls were entering the conflict to their own harm, for there can be no more forbidding portent than this for barbarians as they go into battle.[606] [20] But the Heruls gave no heed even to this; in absolute disregard of it they advanced against their enemy with utter contempt, estimating the outcome of war by superiority of numbers. [21] When the battle came to close quarters, many of the Heruls perished and Rodulf himself also perished, and the rest fled at full speed, forgetting all their courage. [22] As the enemy pursued them, most of them fell there, and only a few succeeded in saving themselves.

[23] For this reason the Heruls were no longer able to dwell in their ancestral lands but, departing from there as quickly as possible, they kept moving forward, roaming the whole country beyond the Danube river together with their wives and children. [24] But when they reached the land where the Rugi had previously lived, a people who had joined the Gothic host and gone to Italy,[607] they settled in that place. [25] But they were pressed by famine because they were in a deserted land, so they departed from there not long afterward and came close to the country of the Gepids. [26] The Gepids at first allowed them to live there and be their neighbors, for they came as suppliants. [27] But afterward for no good reason the Gepids began to mistreat them cruelly. They raped their women and seized their cattle and other property, neglecting to perform no crime whatever, and finally began an unjust attack upon them. [28] The Heruls, unable to bear this any longer, crossed the Danube and decided to live next to the Romans in
that region. This was when Anastasios was emperor, and he received them with great *511/*
friendliness and allowed them to settle where they were.[608] [29] But a short time later *512*
these barbarians gave him offense by their lawless treatment of the Romans there. So
he sent an army against them. [30] The Romans defeated them in battle, killed most *ca.*
of them, and had ample opportunity to destroy them all. [31] But the remainder threw *512–*
518

606. I.e., it meant that the storm god was on your side.

607. I.e., with Theoderic in 489.

608. Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 511/512, says that the Heruls were settled by order of Anastasios, and this was probably around Singidunum.

themselves upon the mercy of the generals and begged them to spare their lives and have them thereafter as allies and servants of the emperor. [32] When Anastasios learned this he was pleased, and so some of the Heruls survived; but they neither became allies *527* of the Romans nor did them any good. [33] But when Justinian took the throne, he granted them good lands and other property, and so he completely succeeded in winning their friendship and persuaded them all to become Christians.[609] [34] As a result they adopted a gentler way of life and decided for the most part to submit to the laws of the Christians. According to the alliance, they are generally arrayed with the Romans against their enemies. [35] They are still, however, faithless toward them and, as they are given to avarice, they are eager to use violence against their neighbors, feeling no shame at such conduct.[610] [36] They have sex in unholy ways, especially men with donkeys; they are the vilest of all people and utterly given over to evil acts. [37] Although a few of them remained at peace with the Romans, as I will recount in the next book,[611] all the rest later revolted for the following reason. [38] The Heruls, displaying their beastly and fanatical character against their own *rex*, one Ochos by name, suddenly killed the *soon before 549* man for no good reason at all, laying against him no other charge than that they wanted henceforth to be without a king.[612] [39] Yet even before this, while their king did have the title, he scarcely had any more power than a private citizen. [40] All claimed the right to sit with him and eat with him, and whoever wished insulted him without restraint, [41] for no people in the world are less bound by convention or more unstable than the Heruls. So when the crime had been done, they immediately regretted it. [42] They said that they were unable to live without a ruler or a general, so after much deliberation it seemed to them best in every way to summon one of their royal family from the island of Thule. I will now explain the reason for this.

15. When the Heruls, defeated in the battle by the Lombards, migrated from their ancestral homes, some of them, as I said above,[613] made their home in the country of Illyria, but the rest refused to cross the Danube river and settled at the very end of the world. [2] Led by many of the royal blood, this latter group traversed all the nations of the Slavs one after the other, crossing a large tract of deserted country, and came to the Varni, as they are called.[614] [3] After them they bypassed the nations of the Danes,[615] without suffering

609. Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.6, says that the Herul king Grepes came to Constantinople with his retinue to be baptized by Justinian on 6 January 528.

610. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 1.5, on pirates.

611. 7.34.42.

612. The sequel to this story is told in 6.15.27–36. The date (soon before 549) is inferred by the reference to these events at 7.34.43.

613. The reference is unclear: 6.14.24?

614. A Germanic people living in northern Germany, attested already in the second century, e.g., Tacitus, *Germania* 40; see also 8.20.2 below.

615. The Danes are first mentioned here and in Jordanes, *Getica* 23; they are the tallest Scandinavians and had driven out the Heruls in the distant past.

violence at the hands of those barbarians. [4] Coming from there to the Ocean, they took to the sea and put in at Thule, remaining there on the island. Thule is extremely large, more than ten times greater than Britain.[616] [5] It lies far to the north of it. On this island the land is for the most part deserted, but in the inhabited parts thirteen populous nations are settled, and there are kings over each nation.[617] [6] In that place a wonderful thing takes place each year. For the sun at the time of the summer solstice never sets for forty days but is constantly visible during this whole time above the earth. [7] Not less than six months later, at the time of the winter solstice, the sun is never seen on this island for forty days, but eternal night envelops it;[618] and as a result, the people there are depressed during this whole time, because they are utterly unable to mingle with each another during this interval. [8] Although I was eager to go to this island and see for myself the things I have told, no opportunity ever presented itself. [9] However, I asked those who come to us from the island how in the world they are able [to calculate the length of the days] given that the sun never rises nor sets there at the specified dates, and they gave me an account that is true and believable. [10] They said that the sun does not indeed set during those forty days just as has been stated, but is visible to the people there at one time toward the east, and again toward the west. [11] Whenever, therefore, on its return, it reaches the same place on the horizon where they had previously been used to seeing it rise, they calculate in this way that one day and one night have passed. [12] When, however, the time of night arrives, they always take note of the courses of the moon and stars and thus calculate the number of days. [13] When a time amounting to thirty-five days has passed in this long night, certain men are sent to the summits of the mountains—men who were used to this task—and when they are able from that point barely to see the sun, they bring back word to the people below that within five days the sun will shine upon them. [14] And then the whole population celebrates a festival at the good news, that too in the darkness. This is the greatest festival that the natives of Thule have; [15] for, I imagine, these islanders always become terrified that the sun may at some point fail them entirely, although they have the same experience every year.

[16] Among the barbarians settled in Thule, one nation only, who are called the Scrithifini, live like beasts.[619] They neither wear garments of cloth nor walk with shoes,

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616. It seems that in Prokopios "Thule" is Scandinavia, not Iceland where its original discoverer, Pytheas of Massalia, probably traveled ca. 306 BC. A parallel description of Scandinavia (Scandza) can be found in Jordanes, *Getica* 16–25, writing at the same time and stressing many of the same points. It is not necessary to assume that both were copying a common source, e.g., Priskos of Panion.

617. Jordanes names almost thirty nations, and notes that Ptolemy mentions only seven.

618. This phenomenon was well known since antiquity; Homer, *Odyssey* 10.82–86 (the Laistrygonians); Pomponius Mela, *Description of the World* 3.57; Plinius, *Natural History* 4.16.104; Tacitus, *Germania* 45; in addition to Jordanes.

619. A similar account of the *Screrefennae* is found in Jordanes, *Getica* 21 (possibly to be emended to *Scretefennae*), and Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* 1.5 (*Scritobini*). The second part of their name, Finni-Fenni (also in Tacitus, *Germania* 46), has been taken as referring to the Lapps.

nor do they drink wine or have their food from the earth. [17] For they neither till the land themselves, nor do their women work it for them, but the women regularly join the men in hunting, their only pursuit. [18] For the forests, which are extremely large, produce for them a great abundance of wild beasts and other animals, as do also the mountains that rise there. [19] They feed exclusively upon the flesh of the wild beasts that they capture and clothe themselves in their skins, and as they have neither flax nor any implement with which to sew, they fasten these skins together by the sinews of the beasts themselves and in this way manage to cover their whole body. [20] Not even their infants are nursed in the same way as among the rest of mankind. [21] For the children of the Scrithifini do not feed upon the milk of women nor do they touch their mother's breast, but they are nourished exclusively on the marrow of the animals killed in the hunt. [22] As soon as a woman gives birth, she throws the infant into a skin and immediately hangs it from a tree; after putting marrow into its mouth she immediately sets out with her husband for the customary hunt. For they do everything in common and engage in this pursuit together too. [23] So much, then, for the daily life of these barbarians. All the other inhabitants of Thule, practically speaking, do not differ much from the rest of mankind, but they revere many gods and spirits both of the heavens and the air, of the earth and the sea, and sundry other spirits that are said to be in the waters of springs and rivers. [24] They incessantly offer up all kinds of sacrifices and make oblations to the dead, but the noblest of sacrifices, in their eyes, is the first human being whom they have taken captive in war. [25] Him they sacrifice to Ares, whom they regard as the greatest god. They sanctify the captive not only by sacrificing him on an altar but alternately by hanging him from a tree, throwing him among thorns, or killing him by some other most cruel form of death. [26] Thus, then, live the inhabitants of Thule. One of their most populous nations is the Gauti,[620] and it was next to them that the incoming Heruls settled at that time.

[27] Now as for the Heruls who lived by the Romans, after they had murdered their king they sent some of their notables to the island of Thule to search out and bring back whomever they were able to find there of the royal blood. [28] When these men reached the island, they found many there of the royal blood, and they selected the one who pleased them most and set out with him to return. [29] But this man fell sick and died when he reached the Danes. Thus these men went back to the island and secured another man, Datios by name. He was joined by his brother Aordos and two hundred youths of the Heruls in Thule. [30] But as much time passed on this journey, it occurred to the Heruls by Singidunum that it would not be in their own interest to import a leader from Thule against the wishes of the emperor Justinian. [31] So they sent envoys to Byzantion, begging the emperor to send them a ruler of his own choice. [32] And he immediately sent them one of the Heruls who had long been living there, Suartua by name. [33] When the Heruls first saw him, they gladly did obeisance to him and obeyed his commands as was customary; but not many days later a messenger

620. These are the Scandinavian Gautar, the Geats of *Beowulf.*

arrived to say that the men from the island of Thule were near. [34] Suartua commanded them to go out to meet those men, his intention being to destroy them, and the Heruls, approving his purpose, went with him. [35] But when the two forces were a day's journey distant from each other, they all abandoned him at night and went over of their own accord to the newcomers, while he himself escaped and set out unattended for Byzantion. [36] Thereupon the emperor earnestly undertook with all his power to restore him to his position,[621] and the Heruls, fearing the power of the Romans, decided to submit to the Gepids. This, then, was the cause of the revolt of the Heruls.

16. Belisarios and Narses came together with their two armies near the city of Fermo, which lies on the shore of the Adriatic Sea, one day's journey from the city of Osimo. [2] In that place they began to hold conferences with all the commanders of the army, considering where it would be most to their advantage to make a first attack against the enemy. [3] For if, on the one hand, they proceeded against the forces besieging Rimini, they suspected that the Goths in Osimo would likely take them from behind and inflict irreparable harm upon both them and the Romans who lived in that region; but on the other hand they were anxious for the besieged, that they might suffer a great misfortune due to their lack of supplies. [4] The majority were hostile toward Ioannes and spoke accordingly. The charge they brought against him was that he had put himself in his present dangerous position through his own irrational daring and desire to gain great sums of money, and that he would not allow the operations of the war to be carried out in an orderly way nor in the manner prescribed by Belisarios. [5] But Narses, who loved Ioannes above all other men, feared that Belisarios might give way to the officers' words and treat the situation at Rimini as secondary, so he spoke as follows: *summer 538*

> [6] Fellow officers, you are not debating a common question, nor are you holding this council regarding a situation about which one might naturally be in doubt, but rather these are circumstances where it is possible even for those who have had no experience of war to make their choice offhand—and thereby choose the better course. [7] If it seems that each of the alternatives offers to those who fail an equal degree of danger and harm on both sides, it is worth deliberating and going thoroughly into the arguments, and only then to make our decision regarding this situation. [8] If we wish to put off the assault on Osimo to some other time, we will not pay a crippling cost, for what difference could arise in the meantime? But if we fail at Rimini, we are likely, if it is not too bitter a thing to say, to shatter the strength of the Romans. [9] Now if Ioannes treated your commands with insolence, most excellent Belisarios, the justice that you have already exacted from him is surely enough, as it is now in your power either to save him in defeat or abandon him to the enemy. [10] But take care that you do not exact from the emperor and from us the penalty for mistakes committed by Ioannes through his ignorance. For if the Goths now capture Rimini, *Narses to the war council*

621. Justinian made him a general of the praesental armies in Constantinople; see 8.25.11 (for 549–552).

> they will have made captive a capable Roman general as well as a whole army and a city subject to the emperor. [11] And the disaster will not stop there, but it will affect the entire fortune of the war. You should reason as follows regarding the enemy, that they are still, even at the present time, far superior to us in the number of their soldiers, and they have lost their courage only because of the many reverses they have suffered. This is natural, for the adversity of fortune has taken away all their confidence. [12] If, therefore, they meet with success at the present time, they will soon recover their spirit and will thereafter carry on this war with a boldness not merely equal to ours, but actually much greater. [13] For those who are freeing themselves from a difficult situation always tend to have more resolve than those who have not yet met with disaster.

That is what Narses said.

[14] At this time a soldier who had slipped through the barbarian guard at Rimini came to the camp and showed Belisarios a letter written to him by Ioannes, [15] with the following message:

Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, to Belisarios

> Know that for a long time all our provisions have been exhausted, we are no longer able either to hold out against the populace or to defend against our assailants, and that within seven days we will unwillingly surrender both ourselves and this city to the enemy. [16] Beyond that point we are absolutely unable to overcome the need that is upon us, and this need, I think, will be a sufficient defense on our behalf, if we do anything that we ought not.

[17] That is what Ioannes wrote. Belisarios, on his part, was perplexed and plunged into the greatest uncertainty. He was fearful concerning the besieged and also suspected that the enemy in Osimo would overrun the whole country and plunder it with total impunity, and also that they would ambush his own army from behind at every opportunity, especially whenever he joined battle with his opponents, and would thus probably do him great and irreparable harm. He then did as follows. [18] He left Aratios with a thousand men there, instructing them to make a camp by the sea, at a distance of two hundred stades from Osimo. [19] He ordered them neither to leave that position nor to fight a decisive action with the enemy, except in defense of the camp, if they ever made an attack upon it. [20] He hoped in this way that the barbarians, seeing Romans encamped close by, would remain quietly in Osimo and not follow his own army to do it harm. [21] He sent by sea a considerable army commanded by Herodianos, Viliarit, and Narses, the brother of Aratios. [22] Hildiger was appointed commander in chief of the expedition, and he was instructed by Belisarios to sail straight for Rimini, taking care not to attempt to put in to shore near the city while the land army was still far behind, for they would be proceeding by a road not far from the coast. [23] He ordered another army under Martinos to march by the coast, keeping near to these ships, and instructed them that, when they came close to the enemy, to burn more campfires than was in proportion to the numbers of the army, and thus lead their opponents to believe that their numbers were greater. [24] He himself, meanwhile, went by another road far removed from the shore with Narses and the rest of the army, passing by the city of

Urbisaglia, which in earlier times Alaric destroyed so completely that nothing whatever remains of its former adornments, except a small remnant of a single gate and of the floor of the adjoining edifice.[622]

17. In that place I saw the following sight. When the army of Ioannes came to Picenum, the people of that region were naturally thrown into great confusion. [2] Among the women, some took hurriedly to flight, wherever each one could, while others were captured and led away chaotically by those who chanced upon them. [3] Now a certain woman of this city had, as it happened, just given birth and had abandoned the infant in its swaddling clothes lying upon the ground; and whether she fled or was captured by someone, she did not return. Surely she disappeared from the world or at least from Italy. [4] So the infant, being abandoned, began to cry. A lone she-goat saw it, took pity, and came near, and gave the infant her udder (for she too, as it happened, had recently brought forth young). She guarded the child carefully, so that no dog or wild beast might harm it. [5] As the confusion was protracted, it happened that the infant ate this food for a long time. [6] Later, when it became known to the people of Picenum that the emperor's army had come there to harm the Goths, but that Romans would suffer no harm from it, they all returned immediately to their homes. [7] When the women who were Romans by race came to Urbisaglia with the men and saw the infant still alive in its swaddling clothes, they were utterly unable to comprehend what had happened and considered it amazing that the infant was still alive. [8] Each of them who chanced to be in a state to do so at the time offered her breast. But the infant would now have nothing to do with human milk nor was the goat willing to let it go, but rather it kept bleating unceasingly about the infant. The goat seemed to those present to be resentful that the women were coming near and disturbing it, and, in a word, it insisted upon claiming the baby as its own. [9] Consequently the women no longer disturbed the infant and the goat continued to feed it free from fear and to care for it generally. Thus the locals appropriately called this infant Aigisthos.[623] [10] When I happened to be in that place, they showed me the strange sight by taking me near the infant and purposely hurting it so that it would cry.[624] [11] The infant, annoyed at those who were hurting it, did cry, whereupon the goat, standing about a stone's throw away from it, heard it and came running and bleating loudly to its side, and took her stand over it so that no one could hurt it again. Such is the story of this Aigisthos.

[12] Belisarios was advancing through the mountains in this region. Seeing as he was greatly inferior to his opponents in numbers, he did not wish to engage in open battle with them, as he could see that the barbarians were actually neutralized by their previous defeats. [13] He thought that, as soon as they learned that a hostile army was coming at them from all sides, they would not think of resistance but would instantly

622. Urbisaglia was ruined during Alaric's invasions of Italy in 408–410.

623. From Greek *aix*, meaning "goat."

624. Cf. Lysias, *Or.* 1.11.

turn to flight. And in fact it turned out that he was entirely correct about this, and his guesses were not far from what actually happened. [14] When they had reached a point in the mountains a day's journey from Rimini, they happened upon a small company of Goths who were traveling on some errand. [15] The Goths, falling in unexpectedly with a hostile army, were unable to get off the road before being shot at by those in the van, and some fell on the spot while others, after receiving wounds, succeeded in escaping by scrambling up some of the high cliffs close by. [16] From that position they watched the Roman army assembling over all the rough ground and supposed them to be many more than they actually were. [17] Seeing the standards of Belisarios there also, they realized that he was leading this army in person. Then night came on and the Romans bivouacked where they were, while the wounded Goths went stealthily to the camp of Vittigis. [18] Reaching it about midday, they displayed their wounds and declared that Belisarios would be upon them almost at once with an army past numbering. [19] Then the Goths began to prepare for battle to the north of the city of Rimini, for they thought that the enemy would come from that direction, and they were all constantly looking toward the heights of the mountain. [20] But when, as night came upon them, they had laid down their weapons and were resting, they saw many campfires to the east of the city, about sixty stades away—these were the fires of Martinos' soldiers—and they fell into a state of helpless fear. [21] They suspected that they would be surrounded by the enemy at daybreak. So for that night they bivouacked in such a state of fear, but on the next day at sunrise they saw a fleet of ships in overwhelming numbers bearing down on them and, being plunged into speechless terror, they made a mad dash into flight. [22] While they were packing up as quickly as they could, there arose so much confusion and shouting among them that they neither paid heed to the commands given nor did they think of anything other than how each man for himself could get away first from the camp and place himself inside the fortifications of Ravenna. [23] And if the besieged had only some strength or daring left in them, they could have killed great numbers of the enemy on the spot by making a sally from the city, and the whole war would have ended there. [24] But, as it was, this was prevented by the great fear that had taken hold of them because of their past experiences and the weakness that had come upon many owing to the lack of provisions. So the barbarians, leaving some of their possessions there in the clamor of their confusion, ran as fast as they could on the road to Ravenna.

18. Hildiger and his men were the first among the Romans to arrive at the enemy's camp; they enslaved those Goths who had remained there suffering from sickness and collected all the valuables that the others had abandoned in their flight. [2] Belisarios with his whole army arrived at midday. When he saw Ioannes and his men pale and dreadfully emaciated, he said to him, hinting at his rashness, that he owed a debt of gratitude to Hildiger. [3] But Ioannes said that he recognized an obligation, not to Hildiger, but to Narses, the emperor's steward, implying, I suppose, that Belisarios had not come to his defense willingly but only after being persuaded by Narses. From that time these

two men began to regard each other with great suspicion. [4] It was for this reason that the friends of Narses even tried to prevent him from marching with Belisarios, and they convinced him how disgraceful it was for one who shared the secrets of the emperor not to be commander in chief of the army but to take orders from a mere general. [5] They insisted that Belisarios would never willingly share with him the command of the army on equal terms, but that if Narses wished to take command of the Roman army for himself, he would be followed by most of the soldiers, and much the best ones too, and their commanders. [6] The Heruls, they said, Narses' own spearmen and guardsmen, the soldiers commanded by Ioustinos and Ioannes himself, together with the forces of Aratios and the other Narses, all amounted to not less than ten thousand men, brave soldiers and especially capable warriors, and they did not wish the subjugation of Italy to be credited solely to Belisarios, but desired that Narses too should have his share of it. [7] They supposed that he had left the company of the emperor, not so that by facing danger himself he might establish the glory of Belisarios, but presumably in order that by performing deeds of wisdom and bravery he might become famous among all men. [8] Furthermore, they said, even Belisarios would no longer be able to accomplish anything without these men. [9] For the greater part of the forces that he commanded had already been left behind in the fortresses and cities that he had himself captured, and they enumerated them all, beginning with Sicily and going to Picenum.

[10] When Narses heard this, he was extremely pleased with the suggestion and could no longer restrain his mind or tolerate the existing arrangement. [11] Often, therefore, when Belisarios thought proper to undertake some new enterprise, he would resort to different pretexts, now one and then another, and thus block the project he was urging. [12] Belisarios perceived this, called together all the commanders, and spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman officers

> It seems to me, fellow officers, that I do not have the same view of this war as you do. [13] I see that you are contemptuous of the enemy as if he had been completely vanquished. [14] But my opinion is that by this confidence of yours we will fall into a danger that can be foreseen, because I know that the barbarians have not been defeated by us because of any lack of courage on their part or because of their inferiority in numbers; rather, it is only because of careful advance planning that they have been outgeneraled and fled from here. [15] I fear that you may be deceived with regard to these facts because of your false estimation of the situation, and may thus do irreparable harm to yourselves and the Roman cause. [16] For those who are lifted up by their achievements because they believe that they have won are more easily destroyed than those who have indeed suffered an unexpected reverse, but thereafter are motivated by fear and abundant respect for their enemy. [17] While indifference has sometimes ruined men who were in a good position, effort coupled with care has often benefited those who have met a reverse. [18] When men drift into unconcern, their strength generally tends to diminish, whereas careful study of a situation naturally instills vigor. [19] Accordingly, let each one of you remember that Vittigis is in Ravenna with many tens of thousands of Goths; Uraïa is besieging Milan and has brought

> all of Liguria under his power; Osimo is already filled with an army both numerous and formidable; and many other places as far as Orvieto, which is close to Rome, are held by barbarian garrisons that are a match for us. [20] Consequently the situation is more perilous for us now than it was formerly, seeing that we have come to be, in a way, surrounded by the enemy. [21] I pass over the report that the Franks also have joined forces with them in Liguria, the knowledge of which cannot but instill a great fear in all Romans. [22] I state, therefore, as my opinion that part of the army should be sent to Liguria and Milan, but the rest should instantly proceed against Osimo and the enemy there, in order to accomplish whatever God permits; and afterward we should also take in hand the other tasks of the war in whatever way seems best and most advantageous.

So spoke Belisarios. [23] Narses replied as follows:

Narses to Belisarios

> In other respects, general, no one can deny that everything you have said is true. [24] But that the emperor's whole army here should be divided between Milan and Osimo alone I consider to be utterly inexpedient. [25] It would not be unreasonable for you, for your part, to lead against those places whomever of the Romans you want, but we, for our part, will take possession for the emperor of the territory of Emilia, which the Goths are making the greatest effort to gain for themselves, and we will harass Ravenna so that you can deal with the enemy before you as you wish, while they are cut off from the hope of armies to support them. [26] For if we choose to join you in besieging Osimo, the barbarians, I fear, will come upon us from Ravenna, with the result that we will be exposed to the enemy on both sides and, being at a distance from our base of supplies, we will be destroyed on the spot.

Such were the words of Narses. [27] Belisarios feared that, if the Romans went against many places at once, the emperor's cause would be weakened and ruined in the ensuing confusion, so he produced a letter that the emperor Justinian had written to the commanders of the army, [28] with the following message: "We have not sent our steward Narses to Italy in order to command the army. We wish Belisarios alone to command the whole army in whatever manner seems best to him, and it is the duty of all of you to obey him in the interest of our republic." That was what the emperor's letter said. [29] But Narses, seizing upon the final words of the letter, declared that Belisarios was just now making plans contrary to the interest of the republic, and for this reason, he said, it was unnecessary for them to follow him.

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19. Upon hearing this Belisarios sent Peranios to Orvieto with a large army and instructions to besiege it, while he himself led his army against Urbino, a city of strong defenses and guarded by a sufficient garrison of Goths (it is at a distance from the city of Rimini of one day's journey for an active traveler); as he led forth the army he was followed by Narses, Ioannes, and all the others. [2] Upon coming near the city, they encamped in two divisions along the foot of the hill. They had not combined their forces at all, but the soldiers of Belisarios held the position to the east of the city, and those of Narses

that to the west. [3] The city of Urbino is situated upon a round and extremely tall hill. However, the hill is neither sheer nor altogether impossible to climb, and it is difficult only because it is steep, especially as one comes close to the city. [4] But it has one approach by level ground on the north. So the Romans were stationed for the siege as stated. Belisarios believed that the barbarians would readily make terms with the Romans for a surrender, believing that they had become terrified by the danger, and so he sent envoys to them, promising that they would receive many benefits and exhorting them to become subjects of the emperor. [5] These envoys stood near the gates (for the enemy would not receive them into the city) and spoke at length, making a great effort to win them over, but the Goths, confident in the strength of their position and their abundance of provisions, would not listen to their proposals and urged the Romans to depart from the city with all speed. [6] When Belisarios heard this, he ordered the army to collect thick poles and make from them a long colonnade. [7] The men hidden inside it would move with it up to the gate at the point where the ground was level and attack the wall. So the soldiers were engaged in this work.

[8] But some of the intimates of Narses gathered around him and declared that Belisarios was undertaking an endless task and devising impracticable plans. Ioannes, they said, had already made an attempt upon the place, and that too at a time when it had only a small guard, and had perceived that it was altogether impregnable (which was true), and they said that he ought to recover for the emperor the land of Emilia. [9] Won over by this suggestion, Narses at night abandoned the siege, although Belisarios begged him earnestly to remain there and help them to capture the city of Urbino. [10] So Narses and his followers went in haste to Rimini with part of the army. As soon as Mora and his barbarians saw at dawn that half the enemy had withdrawn, they began to taunt those who had remained from the walls. [11] But Belisarios wanted to storm the wall with his remaining force. While he was planning this, an altogether wonderful piece of good fortune befell him. [12] There was only one spring in Urbino, and from it all the inhabitants of the city were drawing water. This spring gradually began to give out and dried up all on its own. [13] In three days there was so little water left that the barbarians drawing from it were drinking water along with mud. So they decided to capitulate to the Romans. [14] But Belisarios, who had not received any information about this, was still intending to make an attempt upon the fortifications. He armed his entire force, placed it in a circle around the whole hill and, where the ground was level, he commanded a few men to move forward the *stoa* of poles [15] (that is what they call this device). So these men went into it and began to walk and draw the colonnade with them, hidden from the eyes of the enemy. [16] Thereupon, the barbarians, stretching forth their right hands from the parapet, begged to receive peace. But the Romans, not knowing anything regarding the spring, supposed that it was the combat and device that they dreaded. Both sides, at any rate, gladly refrained from battle. [17] The Goths surrendered themselves and the city to Belisarios on condition that they remain free from harm and become subjects of the emperor on terms of complete equality with the Roman army. [18] Narses, hearing of this success, was filled with both astonishment

and dejection. [19] He himself still remained quietly in Rimini, but he ordered Ioannes to lead his whole army against Cesena. So they went, taking ladders with them. [20] When they came close to the fortress, they attacked and made trial of the fortifications. But the barbarians defended themselves manfully and so many fell in the fight, among them Fanitheus, the leader of the Heruls. [21] So Ioannes failed to capture the fortress of Cesena at that time and made no further attempt upon it, as it seemed impregnable to him; he marched forward with Ioustinos and the rest of the army. [22] By a sudden move he managed to capture an ancient city called Forum Cornelii.[625] As the barbarians were constantly withdrawing before him and never came to blows, he recovered all of Emilia for the emperor. Such was the course of these events.

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20. Now Belisarios, when he captured Urbino at about the winter solstice, thought it inexpedient to march immediately against Osimo, for he suspected that they would consume a long time in besieging it. [2] It was impossible to take the place by storm because of the strength of its defenses, and the barbarians guarding it were both many and the best warriors, as I have stated;[626] as they had plundered a large tract of country, they had brought in for themselves a great store of provisions. [3] But he commanded Aratios with a large army to pass the winter at Fermo and ensure that the barbarians in the future should not be at liberty to make raids from Osimo and use violence in that region with impunity. He himself led his army against Orvieto. [4] Peranios kept urging him to do this, for he had heard from deserters that the Goths in it were running low on provisions, and he was hoping that if, in addition to their lack of supplies, they saw that Belisarios was also present with his whole army (or so it would seem), they would more readily yield, as actually happened. [5] For Belisarios, immediately upon reaching Orvieto, commanded the whole army to encamp in a suitably situated place, while he himself made a circuit of the city, looking carefully to see whether it was perhaps not impossible to take it by storm. And it seemed to him that there was no possible means of taking the place by force. [6] However, he decided that it would not be altogether impossible to capture it by a secret stratagem. [7] For the city occupies a lone hill that rises from low-lying ground, being on the top level and smooth but sheer at the base. Around this hill there stand rocks of equal height that form a kind of circle around it, not immediately at the base of the hill but a stone's throw away. [8] Upon this hill, then, the men of old built the city, and they neither placed walls around it nor built defenses of any other kind, as the place seemed to them impregnable by nature. [9] For there is only one entrance to the city through the rocks, and if the inhabitants of the city keep only this under guard, they have nothing to fear from hostile attacks at any other point. [10] Apart from the place where nature, as I said, constructed the entrance to the city, a river that is always large and impassable occupies the space between the hill and the rocks, which I just mentioned. [11] Thus the ancient Romans had built a short stretch of wall across this approach.

625. Modern Imola.

626. 6.11.2.

There is a gate in it, which the Goths were guarding at that time. Such is the situation of Orvieto. [12] Belisarios began the siege with his whole army, hoping either to attack by way of the river or to reduce the enemy by famine. [13] The barbarians were for a time not lacking in provisions, although their supply was too limited for their needs, but still they held out beyond all expectation in enduring their suffering, never getting enough food to satisfy them and using each day only enough so as not to die of starvation. [14] But finally, when all their provisions were exhausted, they began to eat skins and hides, which they had previously soaked in water for a long time; for their commander Albila, a man of note among the Goths, was feeding them empty hopes.

[15] When the passage of time brought back the summer season,[627] the grain was already ripening uncared for in the fields, but not in the same quantities as before, in fact much less. [16] For it had not been covered in the furrows, either by ploughs or the hand of man, but lay upon the surface, so the earth managed to activate only a small part of it. [17] After that no one reaped it, so when it had become fully ripe it fell again to the ground and nothing grew from it thereafter. The same had happened also in Emilia, [18] and because of this the inhabitants of that region left their homes and went to Picenum, thinking that, as that country was on the sea, it could not be suffering from an absolute lack of food. [19] The Tuscans no less than the others were attacked by famine for the same cause, and those who lived in the mountains were eating loaves made of the acorns of oaks, which they ground up like grain. [20] The natural result of this was that most people fell victim to all manner of diseases, and it was only a few who survived and were saved. [21] It is said that among the Roman farmers in Picenum no fewer than fifty thousand persons perished by famine, and a great many more north of the Adriatic Sea. [22] I will now tell of the appearance they acquired and how they died, for I was an eyewitness. [23] All of them first became lean and pale, for the flesh, lacking nourishment, "turned on itself" (to use the old expression) and the bile, taking over their bodies by its sheer excess, lent them its own appearance.[628] [24] As the evil developed, all moisture left them and the skin became so dry that it resembled leather more than anything else, giving the impression that it had been fastened upon the bones. They changed from a livid to a black color, whereupon they came to resemble burned-up torches. [25] Their faces always wore an expression of amazement, while they always had a dreadful sort of insane stare. Some died because of the lack of food and others too by sating themselves too much with it. [26] For all the warmth that nature kindled within them had died away, so whenever anyone fed them to satiety, and not little by little like infants newly born, the result was that they died much more quickly as they were unable to digest the food. [27] Some too, overcome by hunger, fed upon each other. It is said that two women in a certain field in the country above the city of Rimini ate seventeen men, for these women, as it happened, were the only locals

627. Prokopios places this digression in the middle of a narrative of campaigns that took place in the winter of 538–539, so it is not clear which summer he means here, perhaps both.

628. Cf. the language of Thucydides, *History* 2.48–50, on the plague.

who survived. [28] Consequently, strangers traveling that way lodged in the little house where these women lived, and so they would kill these strangers while they slept and eat them. [29] The story goes that the eighteenth stranger was roused from his sleep just when these *ladies* were about to lay hands upon him. He leaped up, learned from them the whole story, and killed them both. [30] That is how they say it happened. Most people were so overcome by hunger that if they happened on a bit of grass anywhere they would rush to it with great eagerness and, kneeling down, would try to pull it from the ground. [31] Finding themselves unable to do so because all strength had left them, they would fall upon the grass and their own hand, and die. [32] No one ever laid them in the earth, for there was not a man who could care about burials; and yet they remained untouched by any of those birds that tend to feed in great numbers upon dead bodies, for they had nothing that the birds craved. [33] For all the flesh, as I said, had already been consumed by starvation. So much, then, about the famine.

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21. Now when Belisarios heard that Uraïa and the barbarians were besieging Milan, he sent Martinos and Viliarit against them with a numerous army. [2] But when they reached the river Po, which is a day's journey from Milan, they established a camp and remained there. They spent a long time at that camp while deliberating about the crossing of the river. [3] When Mundila heard this, he sent to them one of the Romans, Paulus by name. [4] He passed through the lines of the enemy without being detected and reached the bank of the Po. But he found no ferry ready at the moment, so he stripped down and, at great risk, made the crossing by swimming. [5] When he reached the Roman camp and came into the presence of the commanders, he spoke as follows:

Paulus to the Roman officers

> Martinos and Viliarit, you are not acting justly nor in a manner worthy of your own fame.[629] You claim to have come here to save the emperor's cause but in reality to enhance the power of the Goths. [6] This city of Milan far surpasses all the cities of Italy in size and population and every other sort of prosperity; apart from these qualities, it is an outpost against the Germans and the other barbarians and, so to speak, a projection that protects the whole Roman empire—this city, I say, has fallen into great danger along with Mundila and the emperor's army, harassed as it is by the enemy and neglected meanwhile by you. [7] I refrain from stating how much the emperor has been wronged by you in the present case. For the urgency of the moment does not allow me to use many words, as I seek quick assistance for the city while some hope is still left. [8] But you, I say, must defend the people of Milan in their peril with all possible speed. If you hesitate to come to us in the present crisis, the result will be that we will perish after suffering the most cruel fate possible, while you will have betrayed the emperor's power to the enemy. [9] For it is just to call traitors not only those who open the gates to the enemy but, with no less justice, in fact even greater, those who have the power to defend their friends when they are besieged but who still choose safe hesitation over battle, and thus probably give the victory over them to the enemy.

629. Cf. the Plataians in Thucydides, *History* 2.71.2

[10] Thus spoke Paulus, and Martinos and Viliarit sent him back with the promise that they would follow him immediately. [11] He once more succeeded in getting through the barbarians unnoticed, entered Milan by night, and, having roused the hopes of all the soldiers and Romans, strengthened their resolve to be faithful to the emperor even more. [12] But Martinos and his men continued to be reluctant to move and remained where they were, and much time was consumed by them in hesitating in this way. [13] Finally Martinos, wishing to clear himself of the charge, wrote to Belisarios as follows:

Martinos to Belisarios

> You sent us here to support those endangered in Milan, and we came in great haste, just as you ordered, as far as the river Po; but the army fears to cross this river, for we hear that a strong force of Goths are in Liguria and with them a great multitude of Burgundians. We do not consider ourselves able to fight a decisive battle alone against them. [14] So command Ioannes and Ioustinos, who are nearby in the land of Emilia, to come with all possible speed together with their men and assist us in facing this danger. [15] By going together from here we will be able to be safe ourselves and also to harm the enemy.

[16] Such was the content of Martinos' letter. Belisarios, upon reading it, commanded Ioannes and Ioustinos to join the forces of Martinos and go with all speed against Milan. But they said that they would do nothing except what Narses commanded them. [17] So Belisarios wrote also to Narses as follows:

Belisarios to Narses

> Consider that the whole army of the emperor is one body and that, if it does not display a single purpose like the members of a man, but rather one part wishes to act separately from the others, the result will be that we will perish utterly without having achieved any of our goals. [18] Therefore, leave Emilia, which contains no fortress and brings no advantage to the Romans at the present moment. [19] You should command Ioannes and Ioustinos without any delay to go with the forces of Martinos straight against the enemy at Milan, for they are near at hand and sufficiently strong to overpower the barbarians. [20] For I myself have here no numerous army that I could possibly send and, even apart from this, I think it inexpedient for soldiers to go from here against Milan. [21] A long time would be consumed in the journey so that they would fail to reach the city before the critical moment, and they would be unable to use their horses against the enemy when they arrive on account of the length of the journey. [22] But if the men I mentioned go with Martinos and Viliarit against Milan, they will likely overcome the barbarians there and take possession of Emilia again without encountering any further resistance.

[23] When this letter had been delivered to Narses and he read it, he personally sent orders to Ioannes and Ioustinos to go with the other army to Milan. [24] A little later Ioannes set out for the coast to bring boats from there and so enable the army to cross the river. But an illness fell upon him and put a stop to the undertaking.

[25] But while the forces of Martinos were hesitating to cross the river, and those of Ioannes were awaiting the instructions of Narses, a great amount of time was wasted and

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the siege continued to be pressed. [26] The besieged were already suffering extremely from the famine, and under the overwhelming need of their wretched situation most of them began to eat dogs and mice and other animals such as had never been eaten by man. [27] So the barbarians sent envoys to Mundila, urging him to surrender the city to them on condition that he himself and the soldiers would remain free from harm. [28] Mundila agreed to do this only on condition that they give pledges not only for their own safety but also that they would do no harm to any of the inhabitants. [29] The enemy gave pledges to Mundila and the soldiers but were moved by fury against the Ligurians and were clearly going to destroy them all, so Mundila called all the soldiers together and spoke as follows:

Mundila to his men

> [30] If ever any people had the chance to save their lives with disgrace but chose rather to die with good fame and abandon their immediate safety for a glorious end of life, such men I would wish you also to be at the present time. Do not try to save your life even if it means bringing shame upon yourselves, which is also contrary to the teachings of Belisarios, which you have followed for a long time, so that for you to be anything but noble and extremely courageous is sacrilege. [31] All people who are born face a single fate—to die at the appointed time. But in the manner of their death men differ greatly from each other. [32] The difference is that cowards, as one might expect, always bring insult and ridicule from their enemies upon themselves and then, at the exact time designated by heaven, fulfill their destiny no less than the others; but noble men endure this with virtue and an abundance of glory. [33] Besides, if it had been possible for us to save the people of the city and become slaves of the barbarians, that at least might have brought us some forgiveness for saving ourselves so dishonorably. [34] But if there is no way to avoid looking on while such a multitude of Romans is destroyed by the hand of the enemy, this will be more bitter than any form of death that anyone could imagine. [35] For we would appear to be doing nothing more or less than helping the barbarians to commit this dreadful deed. So while we are still our own masters and can beautify this necessity with our valor, let us make glorious the fortune that has befallen us. [36] I say that we all ought to arm ourselves in the best way and advance on the enemy when they are not expecting us. [37] One of two things will then happen for us: either fortune will bring us some unhoped-for success or we, in achieving a happy end, will rid ourselves of our present suffering and win a glorious reputation.

[38] So spoke Mundila, but none of the soldiers wanted to undergo the danger, so they surrendered themselves and the city on the terms offered by the enemy. [39] The barbarians did them no harm, simply putting them under guard with Mundila, but the city they razed to the ground, killing all the males of every age to the number of not fewer than three hundred thousand and reducing the women to slavery and then presenting them to the Burgundians to repay them for their alliance. [40] When they found Reparatus, the praetorian prefect, they cut his body into small pieces and threw his flesh to the dogs. [41] But Bergantinus (he too happened to be inside Milan) escaped with

his men to Dalmatia, passing through the land of the Veneti and the other nations of that region. From there he went to the emperor bearing news of this great calamity that had befallen the Romans. [42] In consequence, the Goths took by surrender the other cities that had Roman garrisons and again gained control over the whole of Liguria. As for Martinos and Viliarit, they marched back with their army toward Rome.

22. Such was the course of those events. Belisarios, who had not yet learned what had happened in Liguria, was moving with his whole army into Picenum, as the winter was now coming to an end. [2] But on the way he learned what had befallen Milan, and he grieved deeply. [3] After that he never again let Viliarit come into his presence, and he wrote to the emperor everything that had taken place. [4] The emperor treated no one with severity on account of these things but, hearing of the disagreement between Belisarios and Narses, he recalled Narses immediately and appointed Belisarios sole commander for the whole war. [5] Thus Narses returned to Byzantion, taking a few of the soldiers. But the Heruls refused to remain in Italy now that Narses was departing from there, even though Belisarios promised that they would receive many benefits both from himself and from the emperor if they remained; but they all packed up and withdrew, first to Liguria. [6] There they happened upon the army of Uraïa, and they sold all the slaves and animals they were taking with them to the enemy; having thus acquired a great sum of money, they took an oath never to array themselves against Goths or do battle with them. [7] Thus they made their withdrawal in peace and came to the land of the Veneti. But when they met Vitalios there, they began to repent of the wrong they had done the emperor Justinian. [8] To clear the charge against them, they left there Visandus, one of their commanders, with his forces, and all the rest went off to Byzantion under the leadership of Aluith and Filimuth, the latter having command after Fanitheus was killed at Cesena.

[9] Vittigis and the Goths with him, hearing that Belisarios would come against them and Ravenna at the beginning of spring, were plunged into great fear and began *spring 539*
to deliberate about their current situation. Believing that they alone were not a match for their enemy in battle, they decided, after long deliberation, to seek the help of some other barbarians. [10] They avoided the Germans, however, for they had already experienced their devious and untrustworthy character, and were content if the latter did not come against the Goths with Belisarios, but stood aside as neutrals. [11] So they sent envoys to Wacca, the ruler of the Lombards, offering great sums of money and inviting him to a military alliance. [12] But these envoys realized that Wacca was a friend and ally of the emperor and so returned unsuccessful. [13] It was natural, then, that Vittigis should be at a loss in these circumstances and he was constantly calling together many of the elders. He was frequently asking them for advice in forming his plans how to act so as to achieve the greatest success. [14] Many opinions were expressed by those who gathered for the council, some of them irrelevant to the situation and some too that had merit to them. [15] Among them this idea also was advanced, that the emperor of the Romans had never been able to make war upon the barbarians in the West before he

had made a treaty with the Persians. [16] It was then that the Vandals and Moors had been destroyed and the Goths had suffered their present misfortunes. Consequently, if someone once more instigated the king of the Medes to clash with the emperor Justinian, the Romans thereafter would never be able, once that nation had been stirred to war against them, to carry on another war against any people in the world. [17] This suggestion pleased Vittigis himself and the other Goths. It was decided, therefore, that envoys should be sent to Chosroes, the king of the Medes, but that they should not be Goths, in order not to reveal the true nature of the embassy and thereby frustrate the negotiations, but Romans, who were to make him an enemy again of the emperor Justinian. [18] Accordingly they bribed two priests of Liguria with great sums of money to undertake this service. [19] One of these men, who seemed to be the more worthy, undertook the embassy assuming the appearance and the title of bishop, which did not belong to him at all, while the other followed as his attendant. [20] Vittigis gave them a letter written to Chosroes and sent them off. Chosroes, influenced by this letter, committed outrageous acts against the Romans in time of peace, as I recounted in an earlier book.[630] [21] When the emperor Justinian heard that Chosroes and the Persians were making these plans, he decided to end the war in the West as quickly as possible and to recall Belisarios so that he might take the field against the Persians. [22] He immediately dismissed the envoys of Vittigis (they happened to be still in Byzantion), promising that men would be sent by him to Ravenna who would draw up a treaty with the Goths that would further the interests of both sides. [23] But Belisarios did not release these envoys to the enemy until they too had released the embassy of Athanasios and Petros.[631] [24] When these men arrived at Byzantion, the emperor deemed them worthy of the greatest gifts of honor, appointing Athanasios praetorian prefect of Italy and giving Petros the office of *magister*, as it is called. [25] And the winter drew to a close and the fourth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[632]

spring 539 **23.** Belisarios wished first to capture Osimo and Fiesole, and after that to go against Vittigis and Ravenna, as none of the enemy was able any longer to oppose his advance or to harass his rear. [2] He accordingly sent Kyprianos and Ioustinos with their men and some of the Isaurians to Fiesole, along with five hundred infantry from the detachment commanded by Demetrios; and they made camp by the fortress and besieged the barbarians. [3] Martinos and Ioannes with their soldiers and another army, commanded by Ioannes whom they called the Eater, he sent to the country along the Po river. [4] He commanded them to ensure that Uraïa could not advance with his forces from Milan against his own army and, if they were unable to repel the enemy's attack, they were to follow them from behind secretly and harass their rear. *Apr. or May 539* [5] So they took over Tortona, an unwalled city by the river, encamped, and remained there, while Belisarios himself

630. 2.2.1–12.

631. See 5.7.25 for their imprisonment.

632. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 538 to spring 539.

went to the city of Osimo with eleven thousand men. [6] Osimo is the first of the cities in Picenum, being the metropolis, as the Romans call them. It is about eighty-four stades from the shore of the Adriatic Sea and from the city of Ravenna a journey of three days and eighty stades. [7] It is situated upon a very high hill, having no approach at all upon the level ground, and for this reason it is entirely inaccessible for an enemy. [8] In that city Vittigis had assembled all the most notable warriors among the Goths as a garrison, reasoning that the Romans, unless they first captured this city, would never dare to march against Ravenna. [9] When the Roman army arrived at Osimo, Belisarios commanded them all to encamp in a circle about the base of the hill. [10] So they took their station by companies and were setting up huts at various points in that place. The Goths, observing that the enemy were rather far apart from one another and were not able easily to assist each other, as they were in a great plain, suddenly advanced upon them in the late afternoon, on the side to the east of the city, where Belisarios happened to be still engaged in making camp with his spearmen and guardsmen. [11] The Romans took up their arms and, as best as the circumstances allowed, began to defend themselves against their assailants; by their valor they forced them back with the greatest ease and routed them, and in following up their flight they reached the middle of the hill. [12] There the barbarians turned about and, confident in the strength of their position, made a stand against their pursuers. Shooting from above, they slew many of them until the onset of night ended it. Thus the two armies separated and bivouacked that night. [13] Now it happened that on the day before this battle some of the Goths had been sent out to the hinterland at early dawn to gather provisions. [14] They knew nothing of the enemy presence and returned at night; suddenly seeing the fires of the Romans, they became greatly amazed and frightened. [15] Many of them plucked up the courage to take the risk and sneak past the enemy, entering Osimo. But those who were overcome by terror hid themselves for a time in some clumps of trees with the intention of going on to Ravenna, but all of them not long afterward fell into hostile hands and were killed. [16] Belisarios, seeing that Osimo was extremely strong and securely placed, and that it was altogether impossible for him to make an attack on the fortifications, believed that he could never take the place by storm but he hoped by a tight siege to reduce the enemy by cutting off their food supplies and thus bring them under his power by the passage of time. [17] Not far from the circuit-wall there was a place where the ground was covered in dense grass, and this gave rise every day to an engagement between the Romans and the Goths. [18] For every time the Romans saw their opponents cutting this grass for the sake of their horses, they would run up the hill quickly and there engage with the enemy; by performing valiant deeds, they would try to prevent them from carrying off the grass, and they always slew many of the Goths in this place. [19] Then the Goths, finding themselves no match for their enemy in valor, devised the following plan. They removed the wheels from their wagons along with the axles and held them in readiness; then, when they had begun to cut the grass, as soon as they saw that the Romans had reached the middle of the hill in their ascent, they released the wheels to crash down upon them from above. [20] But by some chance it

so happened that these wheels went all the way down to level ground without touching a single man. Failing in this attempt, the barbarians that time fled inside the fortifications, but after that they adopted the following plan. [21] After filling the ravines that are by the walls with ambushes of their best men, a few soldiers would show themselves to the enemy near the grass and, when the fighting came to close quarters, those in hiding would leap out from their ambushes; being greatly superior to the enemy in number and striking terror in them because they were previously unseen, they would kill great numbers of the enemy and always turn the rest to flight. [22] The Romans who had kept their position in the camps could see the enemy emerging from the ambushes and tried, with much shouting, to call their comrades back, but still they failed to do so for those in battle could not hear their cries: they were separated from them by a great expanse of hillside and the barbarians always made a din purposely to drown the voices by beating their weapons together.

[23] When Belisarios was perplexed because of this situation, Prokopios, the author of this history, came before him and said:[633]

Prokopios to Belisarios

The men, general, who blew the trumpets in the Roman army in ancient times knew two different tunes, one of which gave the signal and urged the soldiers on, driving them to battle, while the other used to call the men who were fighting back to the camp, whenever this seemed best to the general. [24] By such means the generals could always give the appropriate commands to the soldiers, and the latter were able to execute the commands conveyed to them. [25] For during combat the human voice is hardly suitable for giving clear instructions, as it obviously has to compete with the clash of arms on every side and fear paralyzes the senses of those fighting. [26] But now such skill has become obsolete through ignorance and it is impossible to signal both commands by one trumpet. So you now do this from now on. [27] Use the cavalry trumpets to urge the soldiers to continue fighting with the enemy, but call the men back with those of the infantry. [28] It will be impossible for them to fail to recognize the sound of either one, for in one the sound issues from leather and thin wood, while in the other from thick brass.

[29] So spoke Prokopios. Belisarios was pleased by the suggestion and, calling together the whole army, spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman army

I believe that enthusiasm is beneficial and thoroughly praiseworthy, but only so long as it is moderate and brings no harm upon those under its spell. [30] For every good thing in excess tends to change for the worse. So from now on do not let your lust for battle get the better of you, for there is no shame in fleeing from one who is inflicting harm upon you. [31] Rather, one who does not look before wading into patent trouble is guilty of foolishness even if he happens to escapes from it. The truly noble man is the one who plays the part of a brave

633. Cf. Polybios, *History* 10.43–47, on the problem of signaling, with the author's personal contribution.

> man in dangers that cannot be avoided. [32] Now the barbarians, given that they are unable to fight a decisive battle with us in the open, are trying to destroy us through ambushes. But for us it is more blameworthy to face the danger than to escape from their ambush. [33] For nothing is more shameful than to fall into the enemy's trap. Leave it to me, then, to ensure that you do not stumble into the enemy's ambushes. [34] Your job will be to withdraw with all speed as soon as I give the signal. This signal, soldiers, will be given by the infantry trumpet.

[35] So spoke Belisarios. And the soldiers, seeing the enemy near the grass, charged them and killed a few of their number in the first onset. [36] A Moor saw among them one in particular who was adorned with gold and, grabbing his head by the hair, began to drag the corpse after him in order to strip it. [37] But some Goth hurled a javelin at him with such lucky aim that the weapon passed through both his legs, piercing the muscles that are behind the shins, so that his two legs were pinned together by the javelin. [38] But the Moor kept holding the hair and dragging the corpse. At this point the barbarians roused their men from the ambush and Belisarios, seeing from the camp what was happening, commanded the foot soldiers to whom this duty was assigned to sound the trumpets quickly. [39] The Romans, hearing it, began to withdraw gradually, taking up and carrying the Moor, javelin and all. And the Goths dared follow them no farther, but returned unsuccessful.

24. As time went on and the barbarians saw that their food supply was becoming extremely scant, they decided to report their situation to Vittigis. [2] As none of them dared to set out on this mission (for they thought that they would never elude their besiegers), they devised the following. [3] They first put in readiness the men whom they intended to send to Vittigis and then waited for a moonless night;[634] when this came they put a letter into their hands, when it was well on in the night, and thereupon all raised a mighty shout at many parts of the circuit-wall. [4] One would have supposed that they had been thrown into confusion by a violent attack of the enemy and an unexpected capture of the city. [5] The Romans, utterly unable to understand what was going on, remained quietly in the camps upon the order of Belisarios, suspecting that some stratagem would be carried out by the city and that an army from Ravenna would assist the enemy and come against them. Moved by these fears, they thought it better to remain quietly in a secure position and thus save themselves than to go on a moonless night into a danger that could, in a way, be foreseen. [6] By this means, therefore, the barbarians evaded the enemy and sent the men on the way to Ravenna. Without being seen by a single one of the enemy, they came to Vittigis on the third day and displayed the letter. [7] Its message was as follows:

garrison of Osimo to Vittigis

> When you appointed us, O king, to garrison Osimo, you said that you had placed in our keeping the keys of Ravenna itself and of your kingdom. [8] For this reason you enjoined upon us to be on guard with all our strength so that

634. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 3.22, for the same expression in the siege of Plataiai.

> we not betray the power of the Goths to the enemy by any act of ours, and you declared that, if we needed your assistance, you would arrive with the whole army even before a messenger could announce your coming. [9] For our part, we have up to now fought against famine and Belisarios, and proved ourselves faithful guardians of your kingdom, but you have seen fit to aid us in no way whatsoever. [10] You must consider, therefore, that the Romans may one day capture Osimo and take up the keys that you yourself are disregarding as they lie here, and then the Romans will be kept out in the future from none of your possessions.

That was what the letter said. [11] When it was brought to Vittigis and he saw it, he did at the moment send the men away with the promise that he would bring assistance to Osimo with the whole army of the Goths; but later, after long consideration, he continued to remain inactive. [12] For he suspected that the soldiers of Ioannes would follow up his rear and thus expose him to attack on both sides, and he also thought that Belisarios had with him a numerous force of able fighting men. Consequently he fell into a helpless fear. [13] But chief among all his concerns was the famine, for he had no source from which to provision his army. [14] The Romans, who were masters of the sea and held the fortress in Ancona, brought in all their supplies from Sicily and Calabria, stored them there, and, at the proper time, easily got them from there. [15] The Goths, on the other hand, would have no means of securing provisions if they marched into the land of Picenum; this he fully realized and so he found himself at a loss. [16] So the men who had lately been sent to Vittigis from Osimo brought back his promise to the city without being detected by their enemy and thereby fortified the barbarians there with empty hopes. [17] Belisarios, upon hearing this from deserters, ordered that a still stricter guard should be kept so this might not happen again. Such was the course of these events.

[18] Meanwhile the soldiers of Kyprianos and Ioustinos who were besieging Fiesole were unable to attack the fortifications or even get close to them; for this fortress was difficult of access on every side. But the barbarians made frequent sallies against them, for they preferred to reach a decision by battle with the Romans than to be hard-pressed by lack of provisions. At first the engagements proved indecisive, but after a time the Romans, now having the advantage, shut the enemy up within their walls and continued to guard them securely, so that no one could leave the city. [19] So the barbarians, seeing that their provisions were failing and finding themselves helpless in their present situation, sent to Vittigis without the knowledge of their enemy, begging him to bring them assistance with all speed, on the ground that they would not hold out much longer. [20] Vittigis commanded Uraïa to go to Pavia with the army in Liguria; for, after that, he declared, he himself would also come to the aid of the besieged with the whole Gothic army. [21] Uraïa acted accordingly and set in motion the whole army that he had with him, going to Pavia. Crossing the river Po, they came to the vicinity of the Roman camp. [22] There they too made camp and established themselves against their enemy, at a distance of about sixty stades from them. Neither side began an attack. [23] The Romans deemed it sufficient to block the enemy so that they could not advance

upon the besieging army, while the barbarians were reluctant to fight a decisive battle with their enemy in that place, reasoning that, if they failed in that engagement, they would ruin the whole cause of the Goths. [24] For, in that case, they would no longer be able to unite with the men of Vittigis or give assistance to the besieged. So both sides, reasoning thus, remained quiet.

25. At this time the Franks, hearing that both Goths and Romans had suffered severely because of the war and thinking for this reason that they could gain the larger part of Italy for themselves with the greatest ease, began to think it preposterous that others were carrying on a war for such a length of time over the rule of a land that was so near to their own, while they themselves were remaining quiet and standing aside for both. [2] So forgetting for the moment their oaths and the treaties that they had made a little before with both the Romans and the Goths (for this nation is the most treacherous in the world when it comes to issues of trust),[635] they immediately gathered to the number of one hundred thousand under the leadership of Theudebert and marched into Italy. They had a small body of cavalry around their leader who were the only ones armed with spears, [3] while all the rest were foot soldiers with neither bows nor spears, but rather each carried a sword, shield, and ax. The iron head of this weapon was thick and extremely sharp on both sides, while the wooden handle was very short. [4] Their custom is to throw these axes at a signal given in the first charge and so to shatter the shields of the enemy and kill the men. [5] Thus the Franks crossed the Alps that separate the Gauls from the Italians, and entered Liguria.[636] [6] Now the Goths had previously been irritated at the ingratitude of the Franks: although they had often promised to give to the Franks large territory and great sums of money in return for an alliance, they had been unwilling to fulfill their own promise in any way. But now that they heard that Theudebert was at hand with a great army, they rejoiced, lifted up by the liveliest hopes and thinking that hereafter they would prevail over their enemy without a battle. [7] As for the Germans, as long as they were in Liguria, they did no harm to the Goths so that the latter would not make an attempt to stop them at the crossing of the Po. [8] When they reached the city of Pavia, where the ancient Romans had constructed a bridge over this river, those who were on guard there gave them every assistance and allowed them to cross the Po unmolested. [9] But, upon getting control of the bridge, the Franks began to sacrifice the women and children of the Goths whom they found there and to throw their bodies into the river as the first fruits of the war. [10] For these barbarians, although they have become Christians, practice most of their ancient religion, for they still make human sacrifices and other unholy offerings, and thereby they obtain oracles. [11] The Goths, upon seeing what was being done, fell into an irresistible fear, took to flight, and got inside the fortifications. So the Germans, having crossed the Po,

635. 5.5.8–10, 5.13.14–28, 6.12.38.

636. The Continuer of Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 538/539, claims that Theudebert looted Genoa.

advanced to the Gothic camp. The Goths were at first pleased to see them coming in small companies toward them, thinking that these men had come to fight in alliance with them. [12] But when a great throng of Germans had poured in and initiated an attack, and by hurling their axes were already slaying many, they turned their backs and rushed off in flight. They passed through the Roman camp and ran to Ravenna. [13] The Romans, seeing them in flight, thought that Belisarios had come to support them and had taken the camp of the enemy and dislodged them from it after defeating them in battle. Wishing to join forces with him, they took up their arms and went forth with all speed. [14] But coming unexpectedly upon a hostile army, they were compelled, against their will, to engage with them and, being badly worsted in the battle, they all fled, not to their camp, to which it was now impossible to return, but to Tuscany. [15] When they had reached safety, they reported to Belisarios all that had happened to them. [16] The Franks, having defeated both armies, as has been said, and having captured both camps without a single man in them, for the time being found provisions there. But in a short time they had consumed them all on account of their great numbers and they were unable to obtain any more except cattle and the water of the Po, as the land was empty of people. [17] But they were unable to digest the meat because of the great quantity of water they drank, so most of them were stricken by diarrhea and dysentery, which they were unable to shake off because of the lack of proper food. [18] They say that at least one-third of the Frankish army died in this way. Hence it was that they remained there, as they were unable to go forward.

[19] When Belisarios heard that an army of Franks was in Italy and that the forces of Martinos and Ioannes had been defeated in battle and had fled, he was at a loss, fearing not only for the whole army but especially for the unit besieging Fiesole, as he learned that these barbarians were nearer to them than to any others. He therefore wrote immediately to Theudebert as follows:

Belisarios to Theudebert

> [20] I consider it unseemly in any case, O noble Theudebert, for a man who lays claim to virtue to fail to be truthful, but especially when he is a ruler, as you are, of nations of such vast populations. [21] But to violate oaths that are set down in writing and to disregard treaties, that would not be proper even for the most dishonorable of men. Yet these very offenses have been committed by you at present, as you know, although it was only recently that you agreed to assist us in this war against the Goths. [22] But now, far from standing aside for both sides, you have actually taken up arms in this reckless manner and attacked us. My excellent friend, please don't do this, all the more so as it involves an insult to the great emperor, who would be likely to exact a huge retribution for the insult. [23] Now the best course is for each man to keep his own possessions in safety and not, by laying claim to the possessions of others, to place his most vital interests in danger.

[24] When Theudebert read this letter, stumped as he was by his present situation and reproached by the Germans because, as they said, they were dying in a deserted land for no good reason, he broke camp with the survivors of the Franks and went home in great speed.

26. Thus did Theudebert depart, after marching into Italy. The soldiers of Martinos and Ioannes returned in spite of the changed situation, so that the enemy might not attack the Romans engaged in the siege. [2] Now the Goths in Osimo, who had learned nothing about the coming of the Franks, had begun to despair of their hope from Ravenna, which was so long deferred, and were planning once more to address an appeal to Vittigis; but seeing that they were unable to elude the guards of the enemy, they were filled with grief. [3] But later they saw that one of the Romans—he was of the Vesi by race and named Bourkentios,[637] and had been assigned to the command of Narses the Armenian—was keeping guard alone at midday, so that no one could come out of the city and gather grass. They approached, hailed him, and, giving pledges that they would do him no harm, urged him to come to meet them, promising that he would receive from them a large sum of money. [4] When they met, the barbarians begged the man to convey a certain letter to Ravenna, naming a fixed sum of gold to be paid to him immediately and promising to give more when he returned bringing them a letter from Vittigis. [5] Won over by the money, the soldier agreed to perform this service and he carried out his promise. He received a sealed letter and carried it with all speed to Ravenna; and, coming before Vittigis, he delivered it to him. [6] It said the following:

garrison of Osimo to Vittigis

> The situation we now find ourselves in will be clearly revealed to you when you ask who the bringer of this letter is. [7] For it is impossible for any Goth to get outside the walls. As for food, the most available supply we have is the grass that grows by the wall, and even this we cannot so much as touch now, except by losing many men in the struggle for it. You and the Goths in Ravenna must now consider what the end of all this will be for us.

[8] When Vittigis read this, he replied as follows:

Vittigis to the garrison of Osimo

> Let no one think that we are slacking in our efforts, dearest of all men, nor that we have reached such a point of utter wretchedness as to abandon the Gothic cause through indolence. [9] On my part, it was only recently that the preparations for departure had been made with all possible thoroughness, and Uraïa with his whole army came under summons from Milan. [10] But the inroad of the Franks, coming upon us unexpectedly as it did, has made havoc of all our preparations, for which I, at least, should not justly bear the blame. [11] For things that are beyond human power exempt from criticism even those who have fallen short, as Chance draws to herself whatever accusations spring from what has happened. [12] Now, however, that we hear that Theudebert is out of the way, we will come to you soon with the whole Gothic army, if God wills it. [13] It is necessary that you endure whatever falls to your lot manfully and adjust to circumstances, calling to mind your own valor, because of which I chose you among the whole army and established you in Osimo, and honoring

637. The Vesi are tentatively identified with the Tervingi, a Gothic tribal division, but also, as Visi, with the Visigoths.

> the reputation that you hold among all the Goths, which led them to put you forward as a bulwark for Ravenna and their own safety.

[14] After writing this letter and rewarding the man with a large sum of money, Vittigis sent him away. When he reached Osimo, he rejoined his comrades and gave as his excuse that some sickness had fallen upon him, for which reason he had been passing the time in a sanctuary not far away. So he was appointed once more to guard duty, to the very watch as before, and, unseen by anyone, he gave the letter to the enemy. When this was read to the people, it gave them all additional encouragement, although they were hard-pressed by the famine. [15] Thus they were unwilling to yield to Belisarios, although he offered many enticements. But when no army had been reported to them as having left Ravenna and they were already in extreme distress because of the lack of provisions, they sent Bourkentios again with a message stating only this, that after five days they would no longer be able to resist the famine. He returned to them a second time with a letter from Vittigis tantalizing them with similar hopes.

[16] But the Romans were no less distressed than the Goths because they had been carrying on such a long siege in a deserted land, and they were completely baffled when the saw the barbarians refusing to give in to them despite all their suffering. [17] Because of this Belisarios was eager to capture alive one of the men of note among the enemy, in order to learn why the barbarians were holding out in such hardship, and Valerianos promised to perform this service for him readily. [18] For there were some men in his command, he explained, from the nation of the Slavs, who had the skill of concealing themselves behind a small rock or any nearby bush and pouncing upon an enemy. [19] In fact, they are constantly practicing this along the river Danube, where they are established, on both the Romans and other barbarians. Belisarios was pleased by this suggestion and ordered him to carry it out quickly. [20] So Valerianos chose one of the Slavs who was well suited as to the size of his body and an especially active man, and commanded him to bring a man of the enemy, assuring him that he would receive a generous reward from Belisarios. [21] He said that he could do this easily in the place where the grass was, because for a long time now the Goths had been feeding upon it, as their provisions were exhausted. [22] So this Slav at early dawn went close to the fortifications and, hiding himself in a bush by drawing his body into a small shape, he remained in concealment near the grass. [23] At daybreak a Goth came there and began hastily to gather herbs, suspecting no harm from the bush but looking about frequently toward the enemy's camp, in case anyone attacked him from there. [24] The Slav seized him unexpectedly from behind, holding him tightly about the waist with both hands, and thus carried him to the camp and handed him over to Valerianos. [25] When he interrogated the prisoner about what basis of confidence and what assurance the Goths could possibly have that they were so absolutely unwilling to yield to the Romans and voluntarily enduring the most dreadful suffering, the barbarian told Valerianos the whole story concerning Bourkentios, and when he was brought before him he proved his guilt. [26] When Bourkentios perceived that he had been already found out, he concealed nothing of what he had done. For that reason Belisarios handed him over to

his comrades to do with as they wished, and they not long afterward burned him alive, with the enemy looking on. Thus did Bourkentios profit from his love for money.

27. When Belisarios saw that the barbarians continued nonetheless to hold out in their suffering, he thought to attack their water supply, believing that in this way he would capture the enemy with greater ease and facility. [2] Now there was a spring on a steep slope to the north of Osimo, about a stone's throw distant from the circuit-wall, which discharged its water through a very small stream into a cistern that had been there from ancient times; and when the cistern filled up from this small inflow, it enabled the inhabitants of Osimo to draw water easily. This suggested to Belisarios that, if the water did not collect there, the barbarians would not be able to fill their jars from the spring's flow, if they were exposed to enemy missiles for a long time. [3] Wishing, therefore, to destroy the cistern, he devised the following. He armed his whole force and drew it up in a circle around the circuit-wall as if for battle, giving his opponents the impression that he was about to attack their defenses from all sides without delay. [4] Consequently the Goths, fearing the attack, remained quietly at the battlements to ward off their enemy from that position. [5] But Belisarios meanwhile led to the cistern five Isaurians who were skilled in masonry; they had mattocks and other implements suitable for cutting stone, and he concealed them as they went under many shields. Then he commanded them to use all their strength to break up and tear down the walls of the cistern as quickly as possible. [6] As for the barbarians, as long as they suspected that these men were coming against the wall, they remained quiet in order to let them come as close as possible and thus form an easy target for their missiles, never once thinking what their real purpose was. But when they saw that the Isaurians had got inside the cistern, they began to hurl stones and shoot all kinds of missiles at them. [7] Then all the other Romans withdrew on the run, but the five Isaurians alone, who had now reached safety, began their work. A vault had been built over the cistern by the men of old in order to shade the water. [8] So when they had got inside, they disregarded the enemy, even though they were shooting furiously. [9] In view of this the Goths could no longer endure to remain inside the fortifications but, opening the small gate on that side, they all charged out against the Isaurians with great fury and tumult. [10] And the Romans, urged on by Belisarios, made a countercharge with great enthusiasm. A fierce battle took place; for a long time they engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle and there was great slaughter on both sides. [11] But the men were falling more thickly among the Romans. As the barbarians were defending from a higher position, a few men could overpower many and, prevailing in the hand-to-hand struggle, they were killing more men than they were losing. [12] But the Romans were determined not to yield, feeling shame before Belisarios, who was present and shouting them on. [13] Then an arrow came flying with a shrill whiz toward the general's belly, having been shot by one of the enemy, either by chance or with intent. This missile was not seen by Belisarios. [14] At any rate, he failed either to guard against it or to deflect it. But a certain spearman named Unigast, who was standing by him, saw it when it was not far from Belisarios' belly and, by stretching his right hand, saved

the general unexpectedly. He himself, wounded by the arrow, withdrew immediately in severe pain. [15] After that, as the sinews were severed, he was never able to use his hand again. The battle, which had begun early in the morning, continued to midday. [16] Seven men of the Armenians from the command of Narses and Aratios performed valiant deeds, running about the unfavorable ground, which was extremely steep, just as if it were level, and killing all the enemies who made a stand against them, until they forced back the barbarians at that point and routed them. [17] Then the other Romans, seeing the enemy now giving way, began to pursue them, the rout became decisive, and the barbarians went back inside the fortifications. [18] Now the Romans thought that the cistern had been destroyed and that the Isaurians had accomplished their task, but in fact they had been unable to remove so much as a pebble from the masonry. [19] For the ancient builders, who cared most of all for excellence in their work, had built it in such a way as to yield neither to time nor to the attempts of men to destroy it. [20] When the Isaurians saw that the Romans had won the position, they left the cistern and went back to the camp, having accomplished nothing. [21] Consequently Belisarios commanded the soldiers to throw into the water the dead bodies of animals and herbs that are deadly to man, and also to put in a kind of stone, set on fire, which in ancient times they used to call *titanos* but which today they call *asbestos*, and quench it in the water. [22] The soldiers acted accordingly, but the barbarians used a well inside the fortifications that produced very little water, and thus they supplied themselves for a while, but with a smaller quantity than they needed. [23] Thereafter Belisarios no longer exerted himself either to capture the place by force or to cut off their water supply or anything else, hoping to overcome the enemy by famine alone. [24] Thus he made sure that the guard was maintained diligently. The Goths, meanwhile, still expecting the army from Ravenna and being in great need of provisions, remained quiet.

fall 539

[25] By this time the Goths who were besieged in Fiesole were beginning to be extremely hard-pressed by famine; unable to endure the suffering and despairing of hope from Ravenna, they decided to surrender to their opponents. [26] They opened negotiations with Kyprianos and Ioustinos and, upon receiving pledges for their lives, surrendered themselves and the fortress. Then Kyprianos and his colleagues, taking them along with the Roman army, established a sufficient garrison at Fiesole and came to Osimo. [27] Belisarios took their leaders and was constantly displaying them to the barbarians in Osimo, exhorting them to set aside their irrational obstinacy and abandon their hope from Ravenna, for no assistance would ever come to them either: after being utterly worn out by hardship, they would still have the same fortune as the garrison in Fiesole.

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[28] After long deliberation among themselves, they saw that they could no longer hold out against the famine and so they were ready to receive his proposals and expressed a desire to surrender the city, on condition that they themselves suffer no harm and depart with their belongings to Ravenna. [29] Belisarios was now uncertain what to do in the situation before him, because he thought it inexpedient that a body of the enemy of such excellence and so numerous besides should join forces with those in Ravenna, but he was also unwilling to lose this opportunity, seeing as he wanted

to move against Ravenna and Vittigis while the situation was still unsettled. [30] The Franks were also causing him great concern, for it seemed that they would come to the assistance of the Goths almost immediately. He was eager to anticipate their arrival, but was unable to end the siege with Osimo still uncaptured. [31] The soldiers, moreover, would not allow him to grant the barbarians their property, displaying many wounds that they had received at their hands there and recounting all the struggles they had endured during this siege; and they declared that the rewards for these sufferings were surely the spoils of the vanquished. [32] Finally, as the Romans were compelled by the pressing need of the moment and the Goths were overcome by the famine, they came to an agreement with each other: the Romans would divide among themselves one-half of their wealth, while the Goths would keep the rest and be subjects of the emperor. [33] Both sides accordingly gave pledges to secure this agreement, the commanders of the Romans that the agreement would be binding and the Goths that they would conceal none of their wealth. [34] Thus they divided the whole of it between them, the Romans took Osimo, and the barbarians joined the emperor's army.

28. After capturing Osimo, Belisarios hastened to besiege Ravenna and he led the whole army against it. He also sent Magnos with a large force beyond Ravenna, with orders to move constantly along the bank of the river Po and keep guard, to prevent the Goths thereafter from bringing in provisions by way of the river. [2] And Vitalios, who had come from Dalmatia with an army to join him, was guarding the other bank of the river. It was here that they met with a piece of good fortune which made it clear that Fortune herself was determining the course of events for both sides. [3] The Goths had previously collected a large number of boats in Liguria and brought them down to the Po, and, after filling them with grain and other supplies, were intending to set sail for Ravenna. [4] But the water in the river fell so low at that time that it was impossible to navigate upon it, until the Romans came up and seized the boats with all their cargoes. [5] Not long afterward the river returned to its proper volume and thereafter became navigable. We have never heard that this has happened before to this river. [6] By this time the barbarians had already begun to feel the lack of provisions, for they were both unable to bring in anything by the Adriatic Sea, as their enemy commanded the sea everywhere, and they were shut off from the river. [7] The rulers of the Franks meanwhile, learning what was going on and wishing to gain Italy for themselves, sent envoys to Vittigis and promised an alliance, on condition that they rule the land jointly with him. [8] When Belisarios heard this, he also sent envoys to speak against the German proposal, among whom was Theodosios, the chief of his own household.

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[9] The envoys of the Germans were admitted to Vittigis' presence first and spoke as follows:

Franks to Vittigis

> The rulers of the Germans have sent us to you, in the first place because they are pained to hear that you are besieged by Belisarios and, in the second place, because they are eager to avenge you with all possible speed in accordance with the terms of our alliance. [10] Now we suppose that our army, numbering not

> fewer than 500,000 fighting men, has by now crossed the Alps, and we boast that they will bury the entire Roman army with their axes at the first charge. [11] It is right for you, now, to conform to the view, not of those who intend to enslave you, but of those who are entering into the danger of war because of their loyalty to the Goths. [12] Besides, if you join forces with us the Romans will have no hope left of facing both our armies in battle; without any effort we will instantly prevail in the war. [13] But if the Goths side with the Romans, still they will not withstand the Frankish nation, for the struggle will not be evenly matched in point of strength; rather, the result for you will be defeat in the company of your greatest enemy. [14] It is utterly foolish to plunge into a disaster that can be foreseen, when it is possible to be saved without danger. The Roman nation has proved itself altogether untrustworthy toward all barbarians, for by its very nature it is hostile to them. [15] We therefore propose, if you are willing, to share with you the rule of all Italy and to govern the land in whatever way seems best. The natural course for you and the Goths to follow is that which is in your interest.

That is what the Franks said. [16] The envoys of Belisarios also came forward and spoke as follows:

Belisarios' envoys to Vittigis

> Why should anyone have to speak at length before you to prove that the multitude of the Germans will inflict no injury on the emperor's army—the thing that they are trying to scare you with—for you have certainly come to understand by long experience what governs the entire course of war, and know that valor is not typically overcome by mere throngs of men? [17] We need not add that, in fact, the emperor is in a position to rival his enemies when it comes to the number of his soldiers. But as for the trustworthiness of these Franks, which they proudly claim to display toward all barbarians, this has been well displayed by them, first to the Thuringians and the Burgundian nation, and then to you also, their allies! [18] We would take pleasure in asking the Franks by what god they can possibly intend to swear when they declare that they will give you surety for their loyalty. [19] For you know how they have honored the one by whom they have already sworn—they who have received from you vast sums of money and the whole of Gaul as the price of their alliance, and yet have decided not merely to render you no assistance at all in your peril but have rather brazenly taken up arms against you, that is assuming that you remember the things that happened on the Po.[638] [20] But why must we prove the impiety of the Franks by recounting past events? Nothing could be filthier than this present embassy of theirs. [21] For just as if they had forgotten the terms they themselves have agreed upon and the oaths they have taken to secure the treaty, they claim a share in all your possessions. [22] If they do actually obtain this from you, you should consider what the end of their insatiable greed for money will be.

[23] Thus spoke the envoys of Belisarios. Vittigis conferred at length with the noblest of the Goths and decided in favor of the proposed treaty with the emperor; he sent

638. 6.25.9.

the envoys of the Germans away with empty hands. From that time the Goths and the Romans began to carry on negotiations with each other, but Belisarios was no less on guard to prevent the barbarians from obtaining provisions. [24] He also commanded Vitalios to go to Venetia and bring over as many of the towns of that region as possible, while he himself sent out Hildiger and maintained a guard over both banks of the Po, in order that the barbarians might yield more readily through lack of provisions; thus he would make the treaty as he himself wished. [25] When he learned that a large amount of grain was still stored in public warehouses inside Ravenna, he bribed one of the inhabitants of the city to set fire secretly to these warehouses and destroy the grain with them. [26] But they also say that they were destroyed by the will of Matasuntha, the wife of Vittigis. As the grain burned suddenly, some suspected that the thing had been carried out by a plot, but others supposed that the place had been struck by lightning. [27] Whichever of the two views they took, both the Goths and Vittigis were plunged into a deeper helplessness and were unable to trust their own compatriots thereafter; they thought that God himself was waging war against them. Such was the course of these events.

[28] Now there are numerous strongholds in the Alps that separate Gaul from Liguria, which the Romans call the Cottian Alps. [29] These were garrisoned for long by many of the noblest of the Goths, who resided in them together with their wives and children. When Belisarios heard that they wished to submit to him, he sent to them one of his officers, Thomas by name, with a few men and instructions to give pledges and accept the surrender of the barbarians there. [30] When they reached the Alps, Sisigis, who commanded the garrisons there, received them in one of the fortresses and not only submitted himself but also urged each of the others to do likewise. [31] At this time Uraïa, who had selected four thousand Ligurians and men from the fortresses in the Alps, was advancing with all speed toward Ravenna to relieve the city. [32] But when these men learned what Sisigis had done, they became fearful for their families and demanded to go first to them. [33] Consequently, Uraïa entered the Cottian Alps with his whole army and laid siege to Sisigis and the force of Thomas. Now when Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, and Martinos learned of this situation (for they happened to be near the Po), they came to the rescue as quickly as possible with their whole army and, by falling suddenly upon some of the fortresses in the Alps, they captured them and made slaves of their inhabitants. A large number of these captives, as chance would have it, turned out to be children and wives of the men who were serving under Uraïa. [34] For most of the men following him had come from these very fortresses. [35] When they learned that their homes had been captured, they detached themselves suddenly from the army of the Goths and decided to join the men under Ioannes. As a result, Uraïa was unable to accomplish anything there or to bring assistance to the Goths endangered in Ravenna. He returned unsuccessful with a few men to Liguria and remained quietly there. So Belisarios without interference held Vittigis and the Gothic nobility confined in Ravenna.

29. It was then that envoys arrived from the emperor, Domnikos and Maximinos, both members of the senate, in order to make peace on the following terms. [2] Vittigis *early 540*

was to receive half of the royal treasure and to rule over the territory that is north of the river Po. The other half of the money would be the emperor's and he was to make subject and tributary to himself all that lay south of the Po. [3] The envoys showed the emperor's letter to Belisarios and went to Ravenna. When the Goths and Vittigis had learned the purpose of their coming, they gladly agreed to make a treaty on these terms. [4] But when Belisarios heard this he was frustrated, considering it a great misfortune that anyone would prevent him from winning a decisive victory in the war as a whole and from leading Vittigis captive to Byzantion, when it was possible to do so with no trouble. [5] So when the envoys returned to him from Ravenna, he refused to ratify the agreement with his own signature. [6] When the Goths became aware of this, they began to think that the Romans were offering them peace with treacherous intent and became suspicious of them. They declared flatly that without the signature and the oath of Belisarios they would never make a treaty with the Romans. [7] And Belisarios, upon hearing that some of the commanders were criticizing him on the ground that he was plotting against the emperor's cause and was therefore unwilling to bring the war to an end, called them all together and, in the presence of Domnikos and Maximinos, spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Roman officers

[8] The fortune of war is not to be taken for granted, as I myself know and think that each of you shares this view with me regarding it. [9] Many men have been deceived by the hope of victory when it seemed certain that it would come to them, while men who, to all appearances, have been defeated, have many times had the fortune to triumph unexpectedly over their adversaries. [10] Consequently, I say that men deliberating over peace should not put before themselves only the expectation of success but, reflecting that the result might go either way, they should make their choice of policy on this basis. [11] In view of this, it has seemed best to me that you, my fellow officers, and these envoys of the emperor come to this meeting in order that we decide at our leisure under these circumstances what is in the emperor's interests; also so that you not criticize me after the fact. [12] For it would be a thing most absurd to be silent while it is still possible to choose the better course, but later to survey the outcome decreed by fortune and bring accusations. [13] You are of course well informed as to the emperor's decision about concluding the war and the wishes of Vittigis. [14] And if you too think this course is advantageous, let each man come forward and say so. But if you think that you are able to recover the whole of Italy for the Romans and to completely overpower the enemy, nothing will prevent you from speaking with utter frankness.

[15] When Belisarios had said this, all expressed the opinion flatly that the emperor's decision was best, and that they would be unable to do the enemy any further harm. [16] Belisarios was pleased with the expression of the commanders' opinion and asked them to set it down in writing, in order that they might never deny it. They accordingly wrote a document stating that they were unable to defeat their opponents in the war.

[17] That was what was taking place in the Roman camp. But the Goths, hard-pressed by the famine and no longer able to endure their suffering, began to hate the rule of Vittigis, seeing that he had been unfortunate in the extreme, but still they were reluctant to yield to the emperor, fearing only this, that upon becoming slaves of the emperor they would be compelled to leave Italy and go to Byzantion and settle there. [18] So after deliberating among themselves, the leading Goths decided to declare Belisarios emperor of the West. Sending to him secretly, they begged him to assume the imperial power; upon this condition, they declared, they would follow him gladly. [19] But Belisarios was unwilling to assume power against the will of the emperor, [20] for he had an extraordinary loathing for the label of rebel and furthermore he had, in fact, been bound by the emperor previously by most solemn oaths never during his lifetime to plan a rebellion. Still, in order to turn the situation to advantage, he let it appear that he was receptive to the proposals of the barbarians. [21] Perceiving this, Vittigis became fearful and, saying that the Goths had deliberated in the best way, he too secretly urged Belisarios to claim the throne; for no one, he said, would oppose him. [22] Then indeed Belisarios again called together the envoys of the emperor and all the commanders and asked them whether they deemed it an important goal to make the Goths with Vittigis captives, to secure as plunder all their wealth, and recover the whole of Italy for the Romans. [23] They said that this would be a lofty and majestic piece of good fortune for the Romans, and they begged him to bring it about as quickly as possible, by whatever means he could. [24] So Belisarios at once sent some of his best men to Vittigis and the notables of the Goths, instructing them to carry out what they had promised. [25] Indeed, the famine would not permit them to postpone the matter to another time, but rather was leading them all the more to it by its increasing pressure. [26] Consequently, they sent envoys again to the Roman camp with instructions to say something else openly but in secret to receive pledges from Belisarios, both that he would do no harm to anyone of the Goths and that henceforth he himself would be king of the Goths and the Italians; with this accomplished, they were to come with him and the Roman army into Ravenna. [27] As for Belisarios, he swore to everything else, just as the envoys required of him, but concerning the kingship he said that he would swear to Vittigis himself and the rulers of the Goths. [28] The envoys, thinking that he would never reject the kingship, but that he would strive for it above all other things, immediately urged him to come with them into Ravenna. [29] Then Belisarios ordered Bessas, Ioannes, Narses, and Aratios to go with their commands to different places (for these were the men whom he suspected of being extremely hostile to him), and to obtain provisions for themselves; for he alleged that it was no longer possible for him, in the place where he was, to bring in provisions for the whole army. [30] So these officers, along with Athanasios, the praetorian prefect, who had recently come from Byzantion, carried out these instructions, but he himself with the remainder of the army marched into Ravenna with the envoys of the Goths. [31] Loading a fleet of ships with grain and *Mar.* other provisions, he gave orders that they should sail with all speed into the harbor of *or May* Classe, which is what the Romans call the suburb of Ravenna where the harbor is. [32] *540*

While I watched the entry of the Roman army into Ravenna at that time, it occurred to me that the outcome of events is not fulfilled by the wisdom of men or any other virtue on their part, but that there is some supernatural power that is ever warping their intentions and leading them in such a way that there will be nothing to hinder that which is being brought to pass. [33] For although the Goths were greatly superior to their opponents in number and in power, and had neither fought a decisive battle since entering Ravenna nor been humbled in morale by any other disaster, still they were being made captives by the weaker army and were regarding the name of slavery as no insult. [34] But the women spat in the faces of their husbands for they had heard from them that the enemy were men of great size and too numerous to be counted; but now they had seen the entire army that had invested the city and, pointing with their hands to the victors, reviled them for their cowardice. [35] As for Belisarios, he held Vittigis under guard but not in disgrace, and urged the barbarians who lived south of the river Po to go to their own lands and care for them without fear. [36] He did this because he felt that he would have no hostile force to deal with in that quarter, and that the Goths of that region would never unite because, as it happened, he had previously established many from the Roman army in the towns there. So these Goths gladly hastened back. [37] Thus the Romans were now making their position secure, for in Ravenna at least they were no longer outnumbered by the Goths. He next took possession of the money in the palace, which he intended to convey to the emperor. [38] He plundered the private property of no Goth nor allowed anyone else to take such plunder, but each of them preserved his property according to the terms of the agreement. [39] When the barbarians who were keeping guard in the strongest of the towns heard that both Ravenna and Vittigis were held by the Romans, they began to send envoys to Belisarios, asking to submit themselves by surrender and the places they guarded. [40] Belisarios willingly furnished pledges to them all and thus took over Terviso and any other strongholds there may have been in Venetia. For Cesena was the only one remaining in Emilia, and this he had previously taken over along with Ravenna. [41] All the Goths who commanded these towns, as soon as they received the pledges, came to Belisarios and remained with him. Hildebad, a man of note who commanded the garrison in Verona, also sent envoys to Belisarios on the same mission as the others, especially because Belisarios had found his children in Ravenna and taken possession of them, but he did not come to Ravenna or submit to Belisarios. For fortune brought him to a situation that I will now explain.

30. Certain officers of the Roman army, out of malice toward Belisarios, began to slander him to the emperor, charging him with usurpation but on no grounds at all. [2] The emperor, not so much because he was persuaded by these slanders as because the Mede War was already upon him, summoned Belisarios to come as quickly as possible in order to take the field against the Persians; meanwhile, he commanded Bessas and Ioannes with the others to take charge of Italy and directed Konstantianos to go to Ravenna from Dalmatia. [3] Now the Goths who lived north of the Po and Ravenna, upon hearing that the emperor was summoning Belisarios, at first paid no attention to

the matter, thinking that Belisarios would never regard the kingdom of Italy as of less account than his loyalty to Justinian. [4] But when they learned that he was making extensive preparations for his departure, all the noblest Goths remaining in that region formed a common purpose and went to Uraïa, the nephew of Vittigis, at Pavia. After first lamenting long with him, they spoke as follows:

Gothic nobles to Uraïa

> [5] No one is more responsible for the present misfortunes of the nation of the Goths than you. For we should have long ago removed that uncle of yours from the kingship, seeing that he has led us in such a cowardly manner and with such ill fortune, just as we removed Theodahad, the nephew of Theoderic, unless it was that we had decided to concede to Vittigis merely the *title* of king out of respect for the natural vigor that *you* seemed to display, but in fact to entrust to you alone the actual rule of the Goths. [6] But what then seemed to be respect, now stands out clearly as foolishness and as the cause of these misfortunes of ours. [7] For as you know, dear Uraïa, very many of the Goths and our noblest have died in the war, and Belisarios will lead away the nobles who survived along with Vittigis and all our wealth. [8] No one could deny that we too will suffer this same fate a little later, seeing that we are reduced to a small and pitiable band. [9] Given that such a dire fate has encompassed us, it will be preferable for us to die with glory than to see our wives and children led by the enemy to the ends of the earth. [10] We will, in all likelihood, accomplish something worthy of virtuous men, if only we have you as our leader in these struggles.

Thus spoke the Goths. [11] Uraïa replied as follows:

Uraïa to the Gothic nobles

> It just so happens that I agree with you that, in our present misfortunes, we ought to choose the peril of battle over slavery. [12] But I think it altogether inexpedient for me to take the throne of the Goths, in the first place because, as the nephew of Vittigis, a man who has been so unfortunate, I will appear contemptible to the enemy, for men believe that the same fortune is always handed on among kinsmen from one to another; [13] and, in the second place, I would seem to act impiously in usurping the rule of my uncle, and from this I will probably make most of you angry with me. [14] My view is that Hildebad must become ruler of the Goths in these straits, a man who has attained the highest excellence and is extraordinarily energetic. [15] It is probable that Theudis also, the ruler of the Visigoths who is Hildebad's uncle, will assist him in the war because of his kinship. For this reason we may be more hopeful in carrying on the struggle against our opponents.

[16] When Uraïa too had spoken thus, it seemed to all the Goths that his words were spoken to their advantage. Hildebad was immediately summoned by them and came from Verona. [17] After clothing him in the purple, they proclaimed him king of the Goths and entreated him to take the situation in hand and set matters right for them. Thus did Hildebad come to power. [18] But a short time after this, he called all the Goths together and spoke as follows:

Hildebad to the Goths

Fellow soldiers, I am well aware that all of you have had experience in many wars, so that now we will probably never set out to make war on the spur of the moment. For experience brings sober judgment to a man, so that he tends not to act rashly. [19] Now you ought, in fairness, to recall all that has befallen us so far, and make plans to meet the present situation with this in mind. [20] For when men forget past events, their spirits are often lifted by ignorance at the wrong times and then, when all is at stake, it ruins them. [21] Now when Vittigis placed himself in the hands of the enemy, it was not against your will nor did you resist it, but at that time you bowed before the adversities of fortune and decided that it was more in our interests for us to sit at home and obey Belisarios rather than risk our lives in endless dangers. [22] But now, upon hearing that Belisarios is setting out for Byzantion, you have decided to rebel. Yet each one of you ought to have taken into consideration that events do not always happen for men as they want, but many times their outcome unexpectedly goes contrary to what they have decided. [23] For chance or a change of heart have a way of setting most things right when least expected; and even now it is by no means unlikely that this is what will happen to Belisarios. [24] It is better, therefore, to inquire of him first and attempt to bring the man back to the earlier agreement, and only after this should you proceed to the next step.

[25] When Hildebad had spoken thus, the Goths decided that he had advised them well, and he sent envoys to Ravenna with all speed. They came before Belisarios, reminded him of the agreement he had made with them, and reproached him as a breaker of his promises, calling him a slave by choice, and rebuked him because, they said, he did not blush at choosing servitude in place of kingship. With many other speeches of a similar sort they kept urging him to accept the rule. [26] Should he do so, they declared that Hildebad would come of his own accord in order to lay down the purple at his feet and do obeisance to Belisarios as emperor of the Goths and Italians. [27] So the envoys kept making these speeches, thinking that the man would without any hesitation take upon himself the royal title immediately. [28] But he, contrary to their expectation, refused them flatly, saying that never, while the emperor Justinian lived, would Belisarios usurp the imperial title. [29] Upon hearing this, they departed as quickly as possible and reported the whole matter to Hildebad. [30] Belisarios departed for Byzantion; and the winter drew to its close and the fifth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[639]

summer 540

639. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 539 to spring 540.

Book Seven

summer 540 **1.** Thus Belisarios departed, although the situation was still unsettled, and he arrived at Byzantion with Vittigis,[640] the Gothic nobles, and the children of Hildebad, bringing with him all the treasure; and he was escorted only by Hildiger, Valerianos, Martinos, and Herodianos. [2] Now the emperor Justinian was pleased to see Vittigis and his wife, and marveled at both the beauty and physical stature of the barbarian throng. [3] But upon receiving the treasure of Theoderic, a notable sight in itself, he displayed it in the palace for the members of the senate to view privately, claiming the honor of the magnitude of the achievement, but neither did he bring it out before the people nor grant Belisarios a triumph, as he had done when he returned victorious over Gelimer and the Vandals. [4] However, everyone was talking about Belisarios; to him were attributed two victories such as had never before fallen to the lot of one man to achieve: he had brought two kings captive to Byzantion and, beyond all expectation, had made Roman spoils of the nations and money of Geiseric and Theoderic. No one, at least among the barbarians, had ever been more illustrious than these two. He had brought their wealth back from the enemy to the republic, and recovered for the empire in a short time almost one-half of its territory on land and sea. [5] The people of Byzantion took delight in watching Belisarios as he came out of his house every day and went to the forum or as he returned to his house, and none of them could get enough of this sight. [6] For his movements resembled a crowded festival procession, as he was always escorted by a large number of Vandals, Goths, and Moors. Furthermore, he had a fine figure and was tall and remarkably handsome. [7] But his conduct was so gentle and so affable toward those who met him that he seemed like a poor man of no account. [8] As a commander, the love ever felt for him both by soldiers and peasants was irresistible, because he was the most generous of all people toward soldiers. When they were defeated in battle, he used to console them by large presents of money for the wounds they had received, and he presented bracelets and necklaces to those who had distinguished themselves to wear as prizes. When a soldier had lost his horse or bow or anything else whatsoever in battle, Belisarios immediately provided another in its place. As for his treatment of peasants, he won their affection because he showed so much restraint and consideration for them that they never suffered any violence when he was general;[641] rather, all those whose land was visited by a large army under his command unexpectedly found that they were enriched, [9] for they always set their own price for everything that they sold. And whenever the

640. Vittigis was given patrician rank and died after living for two years in Constantinople (Jordanes, *Getica* 313).

641. The same praise of Belisarios is made by pseudo-Zacharias, *Chronicle* 9.2a (at the start of his career).

crops were ripe, Belisarios used to watch closely that the cavalry in passing should not damage any man's grain. [10] When the fruit was ripe on the trees, not a single man was permitted to touch it. [11] Furthermore, he possessed self-restraint to an extraordinary degree, so that he never touched any woman other than his wife. [12] Although he took captive so many women from both the Vandals and the Goths, and such beautiful women as no man in the world, I suppose, has ever seen, he refused to allow any of them to come into his presence or meet him in any way. [13] In addition to his other qualities, he was also remarkably quick-witted and able to decide upon the best course of action in difficult situations. [14] In the dangers of war he was courageous without incurring unnecessary risks and daring without losing his cool judgment, either striking quickly or holding back his attack on the enemy according to the needs of the situation. [15] Besides, in desperate situations his thinking was optimistic and he was above succumbing to despair, while he indulged in neither arrogance nor luxury when things were going well; at any rate, no one ever saw Belisarios drunk. [16] As long as he was in command of the Roman army both in Libya and in Italy, he was continually victorious and always acquired whatever lay before him. [17] But when he had been brought back to Byzantion by imperial summons, his ability was recognized even more fully than before. [18] He was outstanding in every aspect of virtue and in the vastness of his wealth, and surpassed the generals of all time in the number of his spearmen and guardsmen; thus he naturally intimidated all officers and soldiers. [19] For no one, I am sure, would dare to resist his commands nor did his men ever refuse to carry out whatever orders he gave, respecting his ability and fearing his power. [20] For he used to equip seven thousand horsemen from his own resources, and not one of these was to be looked down upon: each of them could claim to stand first in the line of battle and to challenge the best of the enemy. [21] Indeed, when their city was under siege by the Goths, the Roman elders were watching the progress of the struggle in the various engagements and they marveled greatly and cried out that one man's household was destroying the power of Theoderic. [22] So, as was noted above, Belisarios became a man of power in terms of his rank and judgment, and he continued to advise measures that were in the interest of the emperor and carry out, with independent judgment, the decisions that were reached.[642]

[23] But the other commanders, who were on a rather more equal footing with each another and had no thought in mind except to make a profit for themselves, had already begun both to plunder the Romans and to put the civilian population at the mercy of the soldiers. Neither were they themselves any longer paying attention to the requirements of the situation nor could they make the soldiers obey their commands. [24] Consequently, they committed many blunders and the interests of the Romans were undermined in a short space of time. I turn now to explain how that happened.

[25] When Hildebad learned that Belisarios had departed from Ravenna and was on his way, he began to gather about him all the barbarians and those Roman soldiers

642. This praise of Belisarios, and the contrast to his unworthy successors that follows, is modeled on Thucydides' corresponding praise of Perikles in *History* 2.65.

who were inclined to favor a rebellion. [26] He sought by every means to strengthen his rule and worked zealously to recover control of Italy for the Gothic nation. [27] At first not more than a thousand men followed him and they held only one city, Pavia, but little by little all the inhabitants of Liguria and Venetia came over to his side. [28] Now there was a certain Alexandros in Byzantion who was in charge of the public accounts; this official the Romans call *logothetes*, using a Greek name. [29] This man was always leveling charges against the soldiers for the losses they caused to the public treasury. By bringing them to trial for offenses of this sort, he quickly rose from obscurity to fame and from poverty to immense wealth, and, not only this, he collected great sums of money for the emperor, more than anyone else. It was he, more than any other man, who was chiefly responsible for the fact that the soldiers were few, poor, and reluctant to face danger. [30] The Byzantines even called him by the name "Snips," because it was easy for him to cut the edge off all around a golden coin and, while thus making it as small as he wished, still to preserve the circular shape it originally had [31] (for they call the tool with which such work is done "snippers"). It was this Alexandros, then, whom the emperor sent to Italy after summoning Belisarios. [32] Directly upon arriving at Ravenna, he published an absurd budget. For though the Italians had neither touched the emperor's money nor committed any offense against the public interest, he summoned them to an audit, charging them with injustice against Theoderic and the other Gothic rulers and compelling them to pay back whatever gains they had made, as he alleged, by deceiving the Goths.[643] [33] In the second place, he unexpectedly treated soldiers to a stingy reckoning in compensating them for their wounds and dangers. Thus not only did the Italians become disaffected from the emperor Justinian, not one of the soldiers was willing any longer to undergo the dangers of war and, by willfully refusing to fight, they caused the strength of the enemy to grow ever greater. [34] While the other commanders were remaining quiet on account of this situation, Vitalios alone (for he happened to have in Venetia a numerous army in addition to a great throng of barbarian Heruls) dared to do battle with Hildebad, fearing, as actually happened, that they would be no longer able to check him at a later time when his power had grown greatly. [35] But in the fierce battle that took place near the city of Terviso, Vitalios was badly defeated and fled, saving a few men but losing most of them there. In this battle many Heruls fell and Visandus, the leader of the Heruls, was killed. [36] Theudemund, the son of Maurikios and grandson of Mundo, a mere lad at the time, came into danger of death but managed to escape with Vitalios. As a result of this achievement the name of Hildebad reached the emperor and all men.

[37] But later it happened that enmity sprang up between Uraïa and Hildebad for the following reason. Uraïa had a wife who was deemed first among all the women of these barbarians in wealth and physical beauty. [38] She once went down to the bath clad in magnificent ornaments and followed by a large retinue. [39] Seeing the wife of

643. The harm done by Alexandros is discussed also at *Secret History* 24.9, and some of his budget cuts explained at 26.29–30. On the way to Italy he installed a garrison at Thermopylai in Greece, paying for it with more budget cuts to the cities (*Secret History* 26.31–34).

Hildebad there in plain garments, she not only did her no obeisance as the consort of the king but ignored and insulted her. For Hildebad was still in poverty, having by no means come into royal wealth. [40] The wife of Hildebad, being much offended by the uncalled-for insult, came to her husband in tears and demanded that he avenge her for the outrageous treatment she had received at the hands of Uraïa's wife. [41] Accordingly Hildebad first slandered Uraïa to the barbarians, saying that he intended to desert to the enemy, but a little later he put him to death by treachery and thereby incurred the hatred of the Goths. [42] For they by no means wanted Uraïa to be so casually removed from the world. A large number of them formed a party and began to denounce Hildebad vehemently as having committed an unholy deed. But no one was willing to punish him for this murder. [43] There was one among them, Vela by name, who, although a Gepid by birth, had risen to become a spearman of the king. [44] This man had wooed a beautiful woman and loved her with an extraordinary passion; but while he was on an expedition against the enemy, to make an attack upon them in the company of certain others, Hildebad married his fiancée off to someone else among the barbarians, either through ignorance or through some other motive. [45] When Vela returned from the army and heard this, being passionate by nature, he could not bear the insult that had been done to him and decided to kill Hildebad immediately, thinking that he would thereby please all the Goths. [46] And so, when the king was once entertaining the noblest of the Goths at a banquet, he watched for his chance and put his plot into execution. [47] For while the king is dining, it is customary for many persons to stand about him and among them his bodyguards. So when he had stretched out his hand to the food as he lay reclining upon the couch, Vela suddenly struck his neck with his sword. [48] While the food was still grasped in the man's fingers, his head was severed and fell upon the table and astonished all those present, who were stunned. [49] Such, then, was the vengeance that overtook Hildebad for the murder of Uraïa. And the winter drew to a close and the sixth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[644]

May or June 541

2. There was a certain Erarius in the Gothic army, a Rugian by birth and a man of great power among these barbarians. The Rugi are a Gothic nation but in ancient times they lived autonomously. [2] Yet Theoderic had early persuaded them, along with certain other nations, to join with him and they were absorbed into the Gothic nation and did all things in common with them against their enemies. [3] But as they had absolutely no intercourse with women other than their own, each successive generation of children was unmixed and preserved the name of their people for themselves. [4] This Erarius, in the midst of the confusion created by the murder of Hildebad, was suddenly proclaimed king by the Rugi. [5] This did not please the Goths at all; however, most of them had fallen into a great depression because the hopes they had formerly placed in Hildebad had been frustrated; for he, they felt, would have been able to recover the kingdom and sovereignty of Italy for the Goths. [6] Erarius, however, did nothing at

644. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 540 to spring 541.

all worthy of note, and after surviving for five months he died in the following manner. [7] There was a certain Totila, a nephew of Hildebad, a man of remarkable prudence, energetic in the extreme, and held in high esteem among the Goths.[645] This Totila happened at that time to be in command of the Goths in Terviso. [8] When he learned that Hildebad had been removed from among men in that way, he sent to Konstantianos at Ravenna asking that pledges be given to him for his safety on condition that he hand over to the Romans both himself and the Goths he commanded along with Terviso. [9] Konstantianos heard this proposal gladly and swore to everything just as Totila requested, and a fixed day for the transaction was agreed upon by both, on which Totila and the Goths who were garrisoning Terviso were to receive into the city some of Konstantianos' associates and put themselves and the city into their hands.

[10] But already the Goths were becoming dissatisfied with Erarius' rule, seeing him as incompetent to carry on the war against the Romans. Most of them were openly abusing him as one who had stood in their way to great achievements, alleging that he had done away with Hildebad. [11] Finally, they made an agreement among themselves and sent to Totila at Terviso, calling him to the throne. For by now they were feeling a great regret for the lost rule of Hildebad and so they began to turn their hope of victory to his relative Totila, placing confidence in the man because his wish was the same as theirs. [12] As for Totila, when the messengers came before him, he revealed his agreement with the Romans but said that, if the Goths were to kill Erarius before a set day, he would both follow them and carry out everything in accordance with their desires. [13] When the barbarians heard this, they set about forming a plot to destroy Erarius. That was what was happening in the Gothic camp. [14] Meanwhile, the Roman armies, although safe due to the enemy's preoccupation, were neither moving to unite their forces nor planning any action against the barbarians. [15] Erarius called all the Goths together and persuaded them to send envoys to the emperor Justinian to beg him to make peace with them on the same terms on which he had previously been willing to conclude a treaty with Vittigis, namely that the Goths would hold the territory north of the Po and withdraw from the rest of Italy. [16] This was approved by the Goths and so he chose some of his closest associates, including one Caballarius, and sent them as envoys. [17] They were ostensibly to discuss the matters that I mentioned above, but secretly he instructed them to negotiate with the emperor nothing other than how he might himself receive a great sum of money and be enrolled among the patricians in return for handing over the whole of Italy and laying aside his title of power. [18] So *Nov.*
the envoys, upon reaching Byzantion, proceeded to negotiate over these matters. It was *541*
at this time that the Goths killed Erarius by treachery. After his death, Totila took over the rule according to the agreement made with them.

3. When the emperor Justinian learned what happened to Erarius and that the Goths had established Totila as ruler over them, he began to rebuke and censure the

645. Totila's name is also given as Baduila in many sources, including his coins.

commanders of the army there and did not let up. [2] As a result Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, Bessas, and Vitalios, and all the others, established garrisons in each city and gathered at Ravenna, where Konstantianos and Alexandros, whom I mentioned previously,[646] were quartered. [3] When they were all gathered together, it was decided that the best course for them was to march first against Verona, which is in Venetia, and then, after capturing that city and the Goths there, to move against Totila and Pavia. [4] So the Roman army assembled with a strength of twelve thousand men, and its commanders were eleven in number, the first of whom happened to be Konstantianos and Alexandros, and they marched straight for the city of Verona. [5] When they had come close to it, about sixty stades away, they made camp in the plain there. The plains there are suitable for cavalry all around and extend as far as the city of Mantua, which is one day's journey from the city of Verona. [6] Now there was a man of note among the Veneti, Marcianus by name, who lived in a fortress not far from the city of Verona. He was a staunch adherent of the emperor and eagerly undertook to hand the city over to the Roman army. [7] As one of the guards had been known to him from childhood, he sent some of his associates to him and persuaded the man with a bribe to receive the emperor's army into the city. [8] When the guard at the gate had agreed, Marcianus sent those who had arranged the matter with him to the commanders of the Roman army, in order to report to them the agreement and to join them in forcing an entrance into the city by night. [9] The commanders then decided that it was advantageous for one of their number to go ahead with a few men and, if the guard set the gates open for them, they were to hold them fast and receive the army in safety into the city. [10] Now no one among them was willing to undertake this danger except Artabazes alone, an Armenian by birth but a man of exceptional ability in war, who offered himself for the mission willingly. [11] This man led some Persians whom Belisarios had, as it happened, sent to Byzantion from Persian territory along with Bleschames a little before this, after his capture of the fortress Sisauranon.[647] [12] So he then selected one hundred men from the whole army and at a late hour of the night went up close to the fortifications. [13] When the guard, true to his agreement, opened the gate for them, some of them took their stand there and were urging the army to come, while the others mounted the wall and killed the men on guard there, falling upon them without warning. [14] When all the Goths perceived their evil situation, they rushed off in flight through another gate. Now there is a certain rock rising to a great height before the walls, from where it is possible to observe everything taking place in Verona and to count the people in it, and, besides, to see for a great distance over the plain. [15] The Goths retreated there and remained quiet during the whole night. As for the Roman army, having reached a point forty stades from the city, it advanced no farther, as the generals were engaged in a dispute among themselves over the money in the city. [16] They continued to squabble over this plunder until day had now clearly dawned and the Goths could see accurately

spring 542

646. 7.1.28–33.

647. 2.19.24–25.

from the height both the number of the enemy scattered through the city and the distance at which the rest of the army had halted from Verona. They rushed toward the city and passed through the very gate through which it had happened that they had previously departed, for those who had entered the city were unable to hold even this gate. [17] So the Romans, coming to an understanding, hastily sought safety on the battlements along the circuit-wall and, when the barbarians in great numbers came against them at close quarters, they all, and Artabazes especially, performed remarkable deeds and defended themselves against their assailants most vigorously. [18] At that moment the commanders of the Roman army had at last reached an agreement with each other regarding the money in Verona, and decided to move against the city with the rest of the army. [19] But finding the gates closed to them and the enemy defending against them most vigorously, they quickly marched back, although they saw the others fighting inside the fortifications and begging them not to abandon them but to remain in place until they could save themselves by fleeing to them. [20] So Artabazes and his men, overwhelmed by the numbers of the enemy and despairing of assistance from their own army, all leaped down outside the wall. [21] Those who had the fortune to fall on smooth ground went unscathed to the Roman army, among whom was Artabazes too, but those who fell on rough ground were all killed instantly. [22] When Artabazes had reached the Roman army, he marched with them, heaping abuse and insults upon them all. After crossing the Po, they entered the city of Faenza, which is in the land of Emilia, 120 stades distant from Ravenna.

4. Totila, upon learning of the events at Verona, summoned many of the Goths from that city and, when they arrived, moved against his opponents with his whole army, amounting to five thousand men. When the commanders of the Roman army learned this, they began to deliberate over their situation. [2] And Artabazes came forward and spoke as follows:

Artabazes to the Roman officers

> Fellow officers, no one of you should look down on the enemy because they are inferior to us in number, nor should you advance against them in a careless frame of mind because you are fighting against men enslaved by Belisarios. [3] For many people, deceived by a false estimate of a situation, have brought about their own downfall, while others who have been filled with unjustified contempt of their foes have seen their whole power ruined; even apart from this, the very fact of their previous ill fortune invites these men to attain a better lot. [4] For when fortune has reduced a man to despair and robbed him of his fair hopes, it changes him to feel an extraordinary degree of daring. [5] I say this to you not because I am moved by mere suspicion but because I have recently become acquainted with the daring of these men while engaged in mortal combat with them. [6] Let no one think that I now marvel at their power because I was defeated along with a handful of men. For men's valor is revealed to those who come to blows with them, whether they are superior in number or inferior. [7] My opinion, then, is that it will be more to our advantage to watch for the

crossing of the river by the barbarians and, when half of them have made it, to engage with them then rather than after they have assembled in one body. [8] Let no man consider such a victory inglorious. Glory and its opposite are decided by the outcome of events alone, and people tend to praise the victors without looking closely into the manner of the victory.

[9] So spoke Artabazes. But the commanders, owing to the divergence of their opinions, did nothing that they should, but continued to remain where they were and lose their opportunity by delay.

[10] By now the army of the Goths had come near and, when they were about to cross the river, Totila called them all together and exhorted them as follows:

Totila to the Goths

My kinsmen, all other battles generally promise a contest that will be more or less even, and thereby impel the contending armies to the struggle. We, however, are entering this combat not on a basis of equality of fortune with our enemy, but facing a very different situation. [11] For they, even if they are defeated, will shortly be able to renew the fight against us. They have a numerous army quartered in the strongholds throughout the whole of Italy and, furthermore, it is not at all improbable that another army will soon come to their assistance from Byzantion. But if we suffer that same fate, there will be a final end to the name and hopes of the Goths. [12] For from an army of two hundred thousand we have been reduced to five thousand men. Having made such a preface, I deem it appropriate for me to remind you of this also, that when you decided to take up arms with Hildebad against the emperor, the number of your band amounted to no more than one thousand men, while your entire territory consisted of the city of Pavia. [13] But as you prevailed in the engagement, both our army and our territory have increased. So that if you are willing now to display that same manly courage, I am hopeful that, as the war goes on, following its natural course, we will entirely prevail over our opponents. [14] For the victors always tend to increase both in numbers and power. Let each one of you, therefore, be eager to join battle with the enemy with all your strength, understanding clearly that if we do not succeed in the present battle it will be impossible to renew the fight against our opponents. [15] It is reasonable, furthermore, for us to grapple with the enemy with high hopes, taking courage from the unjust acts of their men. [16] For such has been their conduct toward their subjects that the Italians at the present time need no further punishment for the flagrant treason that they dared to commit against the Goths, seeing as every form of evil, to put it in a word, has been inflicted upon them by the hands of those whom they cordially received. [17] What enemy could be more easy to overcome than men whose deeds, even those done in God's name, are utterly wicked? In addition, the very fear we inspire in them should rightly increase our confidence as we enter the struggle. [18] For those against whom we proceed are none other than the men who recently first penetrated into the middle of Verona, then abandoned it for no good reason, and, while not a man pursued them, rushed off in a disgraceful flight.

[19] After delivering this exhortation, Totila commanded three hundred of his followers to cross the river at a distance of about twenty stades, get behind the enemy's camp, and, when the battle came to close quarters, to fall upon their rear and shoot and harass them with all their strength in order to throw the Romans into confusion and make them abandon all thought of resistance. [20] He himself, meanwhile, with the rest of the army immediately crossed the river and advanced directly upon his opponents; and the Romans immediately came out to meet him. [21] As both armies advanced, they came nearer to each other and a Goth, Valaris by name, tall of body and most terrifying in appearance, an energetic man and good fighter, rode his horse out before the rest of the army and took his stand between the armies, clad in armor and wearing a helmet on his head. He challenged the Romans, if anyone was willing to do battle with him. [22] Thereupon all remained quiet, being stricken with terror, save Artabazes alone, who advanced to fight the man. [23] So they rode their horses toward each other and, when they came close, both thrust their spears. Artabazes managed to strike first and pierced the right side of Valaris. [24] Mortally wounded, the barbarian was about to fall backward to the earth, but his spear, affixed to the ground behind him and braced against a rock, was keeping him from falling. [25] Artabazes continued to press forward more vigorously, driving the spear into the man's guts, for he did as yet not suppose that he had inflicted a mortal wound. [26] Thus it came about that Valaris' spear stood practically upright and its iron point encountered the breastplate of Artabazes: entering little by little, it went clear through the breastplate and then, slipping further, grazed the skin of Artabazes' neck. [27] By some chance the iron, as it pushed forward, cut an artery that lies in that region, and there was suddenly a great outpouring of blood. [28] The man experienced no pain and he rode back to the Roman army, while Valaris fell dead on the spot. [29] But the flow of blood from Artabazes' wound did not abate and on the third day afterward he departed from among men. This shattered all the hopes of the Romans, as he was rendered unfit for fighting in the engagement that followed and injured their cause in no small degree. [30] For while he went out of range of the missiles and was tending to his wound, the two armies engaged with each other. [31] The battle became fierce, whereupon the three hundred barbarians suddenly appeared advancing behind the Roman army, and when the Romans saw them, supposing that their assailants were a great multitude, they fell into a panic and immediately rushed off in flight, each man as best he could. [32] The barbarians slaughtered the Romans as they fled in complete disorder, captured many of them and held them under guard, and they took all the standards, a thing that had never before happened to the Romans. As for the commanders, each of them fled as he could with only a few men, and, finding safety in whatever cities they happened to reach, they kept them under guard.

5. Not long after this Totila sent an army against Ioustinos and Florence, putting in *summer*
command of the force the most warlike of the Goths, Bleda, Roderic, and Viliarit. *542*
When they came to Florence, they made camp by the wall and began a siege. [2] Ioustinos was anxious because, as it happened, he had brought no provisions at all into

the city, and he sent to Ravenna to the commanders of the Roman army, begging them to come to his assistance with all speed. [3] The messenger slipped through the enemy's lines by night unobserved, reached Ravenna, and reported their situation. [4] As a result, a large Roman army immediately set out for Florence under Bessas, Kyprianos, and Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos. [5] When the Goths learned of this army from their scouts, they broke up the siege and departed for a place called Mugello, a day's journey from Florence. [6] When the Roman army had joined forces with Ioustinos, they left there a few of his men to guard the city and led the rest against the enemy. [7] As they advanced it was decided that the most advantageous plan was for one of the commanders to choose the best fighters in the whole army, go with them in advance of the others, and make a sudden and unexpected attack upon the enemy, while the rest of the army would proceed there at leisure. So they cast lots with this plan in view and awaited the decision of chance in the matter. [8] The lot fell to Ioannes, but the other commanders were no longer willing to abide by the agreement. [9] Thus it was that Ioannes was compelled with his own followers alone to go in advance of the others and attack the enemy. But the barbarians, learning that their opponents were advancing upon them and being greatly terrified, decided to abandon the plain where they had established their camp and ran in confusion to the top of a high hill that rises nearby. [10] When the force of Ioannes arrived there, they too ran up against the enemy and opened the attack. [11] But the barbarians defended themselves vigorously and so a violent struggle took place and many men were beginning to fall on both sides while making a remarkable display of heroism. [12] Ioannes led a charge with loud shouting and commotion against the enemy facing him, but it happened that one of his spearmen was hit by an enemy javelin and fell, as a result of which the Romans, now repulsed, began to retreat. [13] By this time the remainder of the Roman army also had reached the plain, where they formed a phalanx and stood waiting. If they had received the soldiers of Ioannes, who were in flight, they could have advanced all together against the enemy and not only would they have defeated them in the battle, they would have been able also to capture practically the whole force. [14] But by some chance it so fell out that a false rumor was circulated in the Roman army that Ioannes had perished at the hand of one of his own spearmen during the battle. [15] When the report came to the commanders, they were no longer willing to hold their position, but they one and all began to move back in a disgraceful retreat. [16] Neither did they keep their soldiers in order nor in any kind of formation, but each man for himself, just as he could, rushed off in flight. Many perished in this flight, and those who survived continued their flight for many days although they were not being pursued at all. [17] Some time afterward they entered the strongholds that each one happened upon, and reported only this to those whom they chanced to meet, that Ioannes was dead. [18] Consequently they were no longer in contact with each other nor had they any plan to unite thereafter against the enemy, but each remained inside the walls of his own fort and began to prepare for a siege, fearing that the barbarians might come against him. [19] But Totila was showing great kindness to his prisoners and thereby managed to win their allegiance; henceforth

most of them voluntarily served under him against the Romans. And the winter drew to a close, and the seventh year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[648]

6. After this Totila took the fortresses of Cesena and Petra. A little later he entered Tuscany and made trial of the places there, but no one was willing to yield to him, so he crossed the Tiber and, carefully avoiding the territory of Rome, advanced quickly into Campania and Samnium. With no trouble he won the strong city of Benevento, the walls of which he razed to the ground in order that any army coming from Byzantion might not be able, by using this strong base, to cause trouble for the Goths. [2] After this he decided to besiege Naples, because the inhabitants, in spite of his many winning words, were unwilling to have him. For Konon was keeping guard there with a force of a thousand Romans and Isaurians. [3] Totila himself with the greater part of the army made camp not far from the fortifications and remained quiet, but he sent off a part of the army and captured the fortress of Cumae and certain other strongholds, from which he succeeded in gathering great sums of money. [4] Finding the wives of the senators there, he not only refrained from committing outrages upon them but actually showed such kindness as to set them free, and by this act he won a great name for wisdom and humanity among all Romans. As no hostile force was operating against him, he was constantly sending out small detachments of the army all around and accomplishing great things. [5] In this way he took over Bruttium and Lucania, and gained Apulia as well as Calabria. He collected the public taxes and received the revenues from the land instead of those who had owned the estates, and in all other matters he conducted himself as the master of Italy. [6] Thus the Roman army did not receive their customary payments at the appointed times and the emperor owed them great sums of money. [7] Because of this situation the Italians, on the one hand, having been evicted from their property and finding themselves for the second time in grave peril, were beginning to feel extreme grief, while the soldiers, on the other hand, were becoming increasingly insubordinate to their commanders and were content to remain inside the cities. [8] Konstantianos was holding Ravenna, Ioannes Rome, Bessas Spoleto, Ioustinos Florence, and Kyprianos Perugia, and each of the others was holding whatever town in which he had first found shelter and safety in his flight.

spring and summer 542

mid- to late 542

[9] Upon hearing these things, the emperor considered this a disaster and quickly appointed Maximinos praetorian prefect of Italy, charging him with the task of supervising the commanders in waging the war and furnishing the soldiers with provisions according to their needs. [10] He sent a fleet of ships with him, manning them with Thracian and Armenian soldiers. Herodianos was in command of the Thracians and Phazas the Iberian, the nephew of Peranios, of the Armenians; and a few Huns also sailed with them. [11] So Maximinos sailed from Byzantion with the whole fleet and reached Epeiros in Greece, where for no good reason he proceeded to settle down and

648. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 541 to spring 542.

waste precious time. [12] He was utterly inexperienced in the conduct of war and was consequently both cowardly and extremely prone to delay. [13] Later on the emperor sent Demetrios also as general, who had previously served under Belisarios as commander of an infantry unit. [14] So Demetrios sailed to Sicily and, upon learning that Konon and the inhabitants of Naples were extremely hard-pressed by the siege and were altogether out of provisions, he wished to go to their assistance with all speed but was unable to do so because the force with him was small and of little consequence, and so he devised the following plan. [15] Gathering as many ships as possible from all of Sicily and filling them with grain and other provisions, he set sail, making it appear to the enemy that some enormous army was aboard the ships. [16] And he judged the mind of the enemy correctly, for they thought that a great army was coming upon them, reaching this conclusion just because they had learned that a huge fleet was sailing from Sicily. [17] And if Demetrios had been willing from the start to steer straight for Naples, I believe that he would have struck terror into the enemy and saved the city without a man opposing him. [18] But as it was, he feared the danger involved and so did not put in to Naples at all, but, sailing to the harbor of Rome, began hastily to gather soldiers from there. [19] Those soldiers, however, having been defeated by the barbarians and holding them in fear, were unwilling to follow Demetrios against Totila and the Goths. Therefore he was forced to go to Naples with only those who had come with him from Byzantion. [20] Now there was another Demetrios from Kephallonia who had long been a sailor and was thoroughly skilled in all matters pertaining to the sea and its dangers; having sailed with Belisarios to Libya and Italy, he had become noted for this skill of his and for this reason the emperor had appointed him governor of Naples. [21] When the barbarians began to besiege the place, he was carried away by insolence and heaped insults upon Totila, and continued often to do so. In this siege, the man was observed to have an extremely vulgar tongue. [22] As the situation became worse and the loss of life among the besieged was becoming serious, this man, acting on the advice of Konon, had the daring to embark secretly on a skiff and go alone to the general Demetrios. [23] To everyone's surprise, he made the voyage in safety and, coming before Demetrios, he emboldened him greatly and encouraged him on in the task before him. [24] But Totila had heard the whole truth about this fleet and was holding in readiness many dromons, ships of the most excellent kind. When the enemy put in at that part of the coast, not far from Naples, he came upon them unexpectedly, surprised them, and turned the whole force to flight. [25] He killed and captured many; only those escaped who managed from the start to leap into lifeboats, among them Demetrios the general. [26] The barbarians captured all the ships with their cargoes, crews, and all, among whom they found Demetrios, the governor of Naples. Cutting off his tongue and both hands, they did not kill him but released him thus mutilated to go where he would. This then was the penalty that Demetrios paid to Totila for his unbridled tongue.

7. Later on Maximinos too put in at Sicily with all his ships, and upon reaching Syracuse he remained quiet, terrified of war. [2] Now when the commanders of the Roman army

learned this, they all sent to him with great persistence, begging him to come to the rescue with all speed. In addition to the others, Konon did this too from Naples, where he was most vigorously besieged by the barbarians; for by this time all their provisions had been exhausted. [3] But Maximinos, after delaying through the whole critical period in such a state of terror, was finally moved by his fear of the emperor's threats and gave way before the abuse of the other commanders. So while he himself remained just where he was, he sent the whole army to Naples with Herodianos, Demetrios, and Phazas, the winter season being already nearly upon them. [4] But when the Roman fleet had reached a point close to Naples, a violent wind came down upon them, raising an extraordinary storm. [5] Darkness covered everything, while the surging waters prevented the sailors from pulling their oars or accomplishing anything else. Due to the roar of foaming waves they were no longer able to hear one another, but complete confusion prevailed and they were at the mercy of the wind's violence, which carried them against their wishes to the very shore where the enemy were encamped. [6] The barbarians, therefore, boarding the ships of their opponents at their leisure, began to kill the men and sink the ships without meeting any opposition. They also captured the general Demetrios along with many others. [7] But Herodianos and Phazas with a few men managed to escape, because their ships did not come close to the enemy's camp. That was the fate of the Roman fleet. [8] Totila fastened a cord about Demetrios' neck and dragged him up to the wall of Naples, where he ordered him to advise the besieged no longer to ruin themselves by trusting in futile hopes but to hand the city over as quickly as possible to the Goths and rid themselves of bitter hardships; [9] for the emperor, he said, was unable thereafter to send them further aid, and with this fleet had utterly perished both their strength and their hope. Demetrios spoke the words that Totila commanded. [10] The besieged, being now extremely hard-pressed by famine and need, upon seeing the fate of Demetrios and hearing all his words, began to despair of every hope and gave way to groans and helplessness, and the city was filled with loud confusion and lamentation. *late 542*

[11] Afterward Totila called them to the battlements and addressed them as follows: *early 543*

> Men of Naples, it is not because we have any accusation or reproach to bring against you that we have undertaken this siege, but so that we may be able, by freeing you from most hated masters, to repay you for the service you have done us during this war, due to which you have been treated with the utmost severity by the enemy. [12] For it has come about that you alone among all the Italians have displayed the greatest loyalty to the Gothic nation and have fallen most unwillingly under the power of our opponents. [13] So that now, when we have been forced to besiege you along with them, we are reluctant in doing so on account of your loyalty to us, although we are not carrying on the siege to harm the people of Naples. [14] Do not, then, in suffering because of the miseries arising from the siege, think that you must regard the Goths with anger. For those who are striving to benefit their friends earn from them no blame, even though they are forced to use unpleasant means in order to do them this favor. *Totila to the populace of Naples*

> [15] As for the enemy, let not the least fear of them enter your hearts, and be not led by past events to think that they will prevail over us. For the unreasonable events of life, which are due to chance and contrary to expectation, tend to be reversed as time goes on. [16] So great is the goodwill which we feel toward you that we make the concession that both Konon and all his soldiers may go free from harm wherever they may wish, if they yield the city to us and depart from it, taking all their own possessions. Nothing prevents us from taking an oath to secure these terms and the safety of the Neapolitans.

[17] Thus spoke Totila and both the Neapolitans and all the soldiers under Konon expressed their approval. For the sharp necessity of famine was pressing them hard. [18] However, to guard their allegiance to the emperor and still expecting that some assistance would come to them, they agreed to give up the city after thirty days. [19] Totila, wishing to dispel from their minds every hope of assistance from the emperor, set a time of three months, on condition that they would then do what had been agreed. He declared that before then he would make no assault on the wall nor employ any stratagem of any kind against them. The agreement was approved on these terms. [20] But the besieged did not await the appointed day, they were so utterly overcome by the lack of necessities, and a little later received Totila and the barbarians into the city. And the winter drew to its close, and the eighth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[649]

8. When Totila captured Naples, he showed a kindness to his captives that was to be expected neither from an enemy nor a barbarian. [2] Finding the Romans sick with famine—indeed their bodily strength had already been reduced by it—he feared that, if they suddenly sated themselves with food, they would in all probability choke to death, so he devised the following plan. [3] Stationing guards at the harbor and the gates, he gave orders that no one should leave the city. [4] Then he himself, with what might be called a provident parsimony, issued food more sparingly to all than they desired, adding each day only so much to the quantity that the increase from day to day seemed not to be noticed at all. [5] Only after having thus built up their strength did he open the gates and allow each man to go wherever he wished. [6] He embarked on ships, Konon and the soldiers with him, as many as did not want to stay there, and urged them to sail wherever they chose. Thinking that the return to Byzantion would bring disgrace upon them, they were planning to sail with all speed for Rome. [7] But the wind stood against them and so they were unable to put out from the harbor and were in great perplexity, fearing that Totila, victorious as he was, might chose to disregard some part of his agreement and cause them some great harm. [8] When Totila perceived this, he called them all together, reassured them, and gave further confirmation of the pledges he had given, urging them to take courage, mingle with the Gothic army with no fear, buy provisions from them, and procure whatever else they lacked as if from friends.

649. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 542 to spring 543.

[9] But as the wind was still blowing against them and much time was wasted, he gave them horses and pack animals, presented them with traveling money, and instructed them to make the journey to Rome by land, sending with them some of the Gothic notables as an escort. [10] He set about razing the wall of Naples to the ground, so that the Romans could not take possession of it again and, by using it as a stronghold, make trouble for the Goths. [11] For he preferred to settle the issue by a battle with them on a plain rather than to match stratagems and clever tricks. But after tearing down a large part of it he left the rest.

[12] Meanwhile, a certain Roman came before him, a Calabrian by birth, and accused one of Totila's bodyguards of raping his daughter who was a maiden, against her will. [13] As the man did not deny the charge, Totila hastened to punish him for the offense and imprisoned him. [14] But the most notable men among the barbarians began to fear for him (for he was, as it happened, an energetic and good warrior), and so they immediately gathered and went before Totila with the request that he dismiss the charge against the man. [15] After hearing their statement, he spoke as follows gently and with no agitation:

Totila to the Gothic nobles

> Fellow soldiers, the reason I speak as I now will is not that I am yielding to a harsh inhumanity or taking delight in the misfortunes of my kinsmen, but I feel the greatest possible fear that some disaster might befall the Goths. [16] For my part, I know that the great majority of mankind twist the names of things into their opposites.[650] [17] On the one hand, they tend to call kindness that which is really lawlessness, which undermines everything respectable and ushers in utter confusion; on the other hand, they call any man perverse and absolutely difficult who wishes to preserve the lawful order with exactness, and their goal is to use these names as screens for their sins and so be able to do wrong more fearlessly and display their malice. [18] I urge you not to exchange your own security for the crime of a single man, nor to take part yourselves in this foul sin, seeing that you have done no wrong. For committing a sin and preventing the punishment of those who have are, in my judgment, equivalent. [19] I wish, then, that you make your decision about the matter by taking this point of view, namely that two alternatives are now presented to your choice, either that this man not pay the penalty for the wrong he has done or that the Gothic nation be saved and achieve victory in the war. [20] Think about it: we had, at the beginning of this war, a vast army unsurpassed both in fame and in actual experience of war; our wealth, in sum, was too great to be counted; we possessed an abundance of horses and weapons; and we held all the fortresses in Italy. These things are regarded as not entirely useless when men are entering into a war. [21] But while we were under Theodahad, a man who thought less of justice than how he would become rich, the lawlessness of our lifestyle hardly caused God to be on our side, and to what our fortune has come as a result you are well aware, just as you know what kind of men and how few of them have defeated us. [22] But now that God has

650. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 3.82–83, on how words change their meaning in civil strife.

inflicted upon us sufficient punishment for our sins, he is again ordering our lives in accordance with our will and, to summarize the situation, he is guiding our affairs in a better way than we could have hoped for, seeing as we have had the fortune to prevail over our enemies beyond the measure of our actual strength. [23] Therefore, it will be more in our interest to safeguard the cause of our victory by acting righteously than to reverse our course and let it seem that we have become envious of our own selves. [24] For it is simply not possible—no, not at all—for a man who commits injustice and rapes to do well in battle, but the fortune of war is decreed according to the life of the individual.

Thus spoke Totila. [25] The notables of the Goths approved his words and no longer begged for the spearman's release, consenting that he be treated in whatever manner Totila deemed best. And he executed the man not long afterward, and gave to the raped girl all the money that belonged to him.

9. While Totila was busy with this, the commanders of the Roman army together with the soldiers were plundering the possessions of their subjects, and they did not shrink from any act of insolence and licentiousness whatsoever: the officers were cavorting with mistresses inside the fortresses while the soldiers, showing themselves more and more insubordinate to their commanders, were falling into every form of lawlessness. [2] As for the Italians, all they could do was suffer most severely at the hands of both armies. [3] While they were deprived of their lands by the enemy, the emperor's army took all their household goods. And they were forced besides to suffer cruel torture and death for no good cause, being hard-pressed by the scarcity of food. [4] For the soldiers, although utterly unable to defend them when they were maltreated by the enemy, not only refused to feel any shame at the situation but actually made the people long for the barbarians through the wrongs they committed. [5] Konstantianos, being at a loss because of this situation, sent a letter to the emperor Justinian, setting forth plainly that he was unable to hold out in the war against the Goths. [6] The other commanders, as if giving their vote in support of this view, indicated in this same letter their reluctance to carry on the struggle. Such then were the fortunes of the Italians.

543 Totila sent a letter to the Roman senate, which said the following:

Totila to the Roman senate

[7] Those who wrong their neighbors, either because they are ignorant to begin with or because they are forgetful, may be forgiven by the victims of their offenses. For the cause of their wrongdoing excuses them for the most part. [8] If, however, a man does wrong as a result solely of deliberate intent, he has nothing left with which to defend his conduct. [9] It is not the deed alone but also the intention for which this man himself must justly bear the responsibility. [10] Therefore, given that the matter stands in this way, consider what defense you would possibly have to make for your actions toward the Goths. Has it really come to pass that you are ignorant of the benefactions of Theoderic and Amalasuntha, or have they been scrubbed from your mind through the lapse of time and forgetfulness? [11] No, neither is true. For it was not in some small matter, nor toward your

> ancestors in ancient times that their kindness was displayed, but it was in matters of vital importance, dear Romans, and toward your very selves, recently, and in days that are close at hand. [12] Was it because you had heard rumors or learned by experience that the Graeci were benevolent toward their subjects, and so you decided to abandon to them the cause of the Goths and Italians? [13] At any rate, you have, I think, entertained them royally, but you know well what sort of guests and friends they have proven to be—think of the accounting of Alexandros! [14] I pass by the soldiers and generals by whose kindness and magnanimity you have profited, and it is precisely because of this conduct that their fortunes have fallen so low. [15] Let none of you think that I am moved by youthful ambition to bring these reproaches against them nor that I am inclined to boastful speech merely because I am a ruler of barbarians. [16] Prevailing over those men, I say, has not been a work of our valor, but I confidently maintain that a sort of vengeance has overtaken them for the wrongs you have suffered at their hands. [17] How then could it not seem most irrational that, while God is punishing them on your behalf, you adhere to their absurd cause and are unwilling to be rid of the harm they are causing you? At this point, you need to make it easier for yourselves to justify your actions to the Goths and for us to forgive you. [18] You will do this if, without awaiting the outcome of war, now that there is only scant hope left to you and that too of no avail, you choose a higher course and set right the wrongs you have committed against us.

[19] That was the message. Totila, placing it in the hands of some captives, commanded them to go to Rome and give it to the senators. And they did this. [20] But Ioannes prevented those who saw this letter from making any reply to Totila. For this reason Totila made a second attempt, writing many short letters in which he placed the most solemn oaths, swearing in explicit terms that the Goths would never harm any of the Romans. [21] Now I have no idea what persons conveyed these writings to Rome, for all of them were posted late at night in the conspicuous places in the city, and only when it was day were they discovered. The commanders of the Roman army suspected the priests of the Arians and expelled them all from the city immediately. [22] Totila, upon hearing this, sent a detachment of his army into Calabria to make an attempt on the fort at Otranto. But as the soldiers guarding this fortress absolutely refused to yield to him, he commanded the force he had sent there to begin a siege, while he, with the greater part of the army, went to the region of Rome. [23] When the emperor heard this, he did not know what to do and, even though the Persians were still pressing him hard, was forced to send Belisarios against Totila. And the winter drew to a close, and the ninth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[651]

10. Thus Belisarios, for the second time, went to Italy. But as he had an extremely small *544*
number of soldiers (for it was impossible for him to detach his own retinue from the army in Persia), he went around the whole of Thrace offering money to gather fresh

651. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 543 to spring 544.

volunteers.[652] [2] By imperial command he was accompanied by Vitalios, the general of Illyria who had recently returned from Italy, where he had left the Illyrian soldiers. [3] So together they collected about four thousand men and went to Salona with the intention of going to Ravenna first and conducting the war from there in whatever way was possible. [4] To land near Rome would be impossible, as they could neither keep their movements secret from the enemy (they had heard that the Goths were encamped both in Calabria and in Campania) nor overpower them in any way, for they were not going against them evenly matched in strength. [5] Meanwhile, those besieged in Otranto, seeing that their provisions were absolutely exhausted, made an agreement with the besieging barbarians that they would hand the place over by surrender, and a set day was agreed upon by both. [6] But Belisarios loaded ships with provisions for a year and commanded Valentinos to sail with them to Otranto. He was to remove the former garrison from the fortress as quickly as possible—he learned that they had been weakened by disease and famine—and to establish as a garrison in their place some of the men sailing with him. It would thus be easy for them, being fresh and not lacking in necessaries, to guard the fortress securely. [7] So Valentinos, chancing upon a favorable wind, sailed with this fleet to Otranto and arrived four days before the time appointed for the surrender. Finding the harbor unguarded, he took possession of it and managed to enter the fortress without trouble. [8] For the Goths were confident in the agreement they had made and did not expect to encounter any reversal in the interval; as a result, they were lax in dealing with Otranto and were remaining quiet. [9] Then, however, upon seeing the fleet suddenly bearing down upon them, they took fright and abandoned the siege; making camp at a great distance from the place, they reported what had happened to Totila. So close did the fort at Otranto come to danger. [10] But some of Valentinos' men, wishing to plunder the adjoining country, began to make raids, and by some chance they encountered the enemy by the shore of the sea and engaged with them. [11] Being badly defeated in the battle, most of them fled into the sea; in this way they lost 170 men, and the rest withdrew to the fortress. [12] Valentinos, finding the previous garrison half dead, removed them from the fortress and substituted other fresh men, just as Belisarios had instructed him to do; leaving them supplies for a year, he returned with the rest of the army to Salona. [13] Then Belisarios, setting sail from there with the whole fleet, put in at Pola, where he remained for some time, putting the army in order. [14] Totila, hearing that Belisarios had reached Pola, wanted to discover the strength of the army he was bringing, so he did as follows. There was a certain Bonos, a nephew of Ioannes, commanding the garrison at Genoa. [15] He made use of this man's name and wrote a letter to Belisarios purporting to be from him and urging him to come with all speed to their assistance, as they were in some extreme peril. [16] Then he chose five discerning men, put the letter into their hands, and instructed them to observe accurately the force of Belisarios, while palming themselves off as having been sent from Bonos.

652. At *Secret History* 4.40–41, Prokopios reveals that many hoped that Belisarios would at this point turn against Justinian and Theodora, but they were disappointed.

[17] So when the men came before Belisarios, he received them with great friendliness, as was his custom. [18] After reading the letter, he instructed them to report back to Bonos that he would soon arrive with the whole army. Then, after they had looked over everything exactly as Totila had directed them to do, they returned to the Gothic camp and reported that the force of Belisarios was inconsiderable.

[19] Meanwhile Totila captured the city of Tivoli, which contained a guard of Isaurians, through an act of treason in the following way. Some of the inhabitants of the place were guarding the gates with the Isaurians. [20] These men, quarreled with the Isaurians who were keeping guard with them (although the latter had given no cause for offense), and invited the enemy, who were encamped close by, to come in by night. [21] But the Isaurians adopted a common plan while the city was being captured and practically all of them managed to escape. [22] Not one of the inhabitants, however, was spared by the Goths; they were all killed, along with the priest of the city, in a manner that I will not mention, although I know it well, in order that I may not leave posterity with such records of inhuman cruelty. Among the victims Catellus also perished, a man of note among the Italians.[653] [23] So the barbarians captured Tivoli and the Romans, in consequence, were no longer able to bring in provisions from Tuscany by way of the Tiber. For the city, situated as it is fronting the river[654] about 120 stades above Rome, became thereafter an outpost against those wishing to sail into Rome by that route.

11. Such was the fate that befell Tivoli. As for Belisarios, he arrived at Ravenna with the whole fleet, where he gathered the Goths who were present and the Roman soldiers, and spoke as follows:

Belisarios to the Romans and Goths

> This would not be the first time that the achievements of virtue have been nullified by wickedness. [2] This is a wholly natural aspect of human affairs from ancient times, and the malice of wicked persons has often managed to frustrate and destroy the deeds of good men. Now too this very thing has ruined the cause of the emperor. [3] He is so deeply concerned to correct the mistakes which have been made that he deems the task of defeating the Persians as less important than this situation, and so he decided at the present time to send me to you so that I may be able to set right and heal whatever has been done wrongly by the officers to his soldiers or to the Goths. [4] Certainly, it is not human that no one should make any mistakes at all, a thing that would be unnatural besides; but the task of setting right the mistakes that have been made eminently befits an emperor, and can console those whom he loves. [5] Not only will you be free of distress, but also you will immediately grasp and enjoy the emperor's goodwill toward you. Of all things in the world what could be more valuable for a man than this? [6] Seeing then that I am here with you for this very purpose, it is incumbent upon each one of you to exert himself to the utmost so that you may profit

653. Nothing certain is known of this man; he is possibly identical with a man sent by Theoderic on a minor mission between 523 and 526 (Cassiodorus, *Variae* 5.35).

654. Actually the Anio, not the Tiber.

> from this opportunity. [7] If any one of you happens to have relatives or friends with the usurper Totila, let him summon them as quickly as possible, explaining the emperor's purpose. [8] In this way you may gain the blessings that flow both from peace and from the mighty emperor. For my part, I have neither come here with a lust for war against anyone, nor would I ever willingly be an enemy of the emperor's subjects. [9] If, however, they consider it too demeaning a thing to opt for a course that is better for them and take their stand against us, it will be necessary for us too to treat them as enemies, even though it is sorely against our will.

[10] That is what Belisarios said, but not one of the enemy came over to him, either Goth or Roman. [11] Next he sent his spearman Thurimuth and some of his followers with Vitalios and the Illyrian soldiers into Emilia, commanding them to make attempts on the towns there. [12] So Vitalios with this force came up to the city of Bologna and, after taking some of the neighboring fortresses by surrender, remained inactive in Bologna. [13] But not long after this all the Illyrians who were serving under him, suddenly and without having suffered any hard treatment or heard any rebuke, withdrew secretly from the town by night and went home. [14] Sending envoys to the emperor, they begged him to grant them a pardon, seeing that they had come to their homes in this manner for no other reason than that, after long service in Italy without receiving the regular pay at all, the state now owed them a large sum of money. [15] But it happened that a Hunnic army had fallen upon Illyria and enslaved their women and children, [16] and it was when they learned this, and also because they had a scarcity of provisions in Italy, that they withdrew. At first the emperor was angry with them, but he later forgave them. When Totila learned of the withdrawal of the Illyrians, he sent an army against Bologna to capture Vitalios and his men by a swift attack. [17] But Vitalios and Thurimuth laid ambushes in several places and destroyed many of the attacking force and turned the rest to flight. [18] There Nazares, a man of note and an Illyrian by birth, commander of the soldiers in Illyria, surpassed all others by the remarkable deeds he performed against the enemy. Thereupon Thurimuth came to Belisarios in Ravenna.

[19] Belisarios then sent three of his own spearmen, Thurimuth, Ricila, and Sabinianos, with a thousand soldiers to the city of Osimo, in order to support Magnos and the Romans besieged there. [20] They slipped past Totila and the enemy's camp, got inside Osimo by night, and began planning sallies against their opponents. [21] So on the following day about noon, upon learning that some of the enemy were near, they sallied forth to confront them; but beforehand they had decided to send scouts against them to spy out the enemy's strength so as not to attack them without reconnoitering. [22] Yet Ricila, the spearman of Belisarios, who chanced to be drunk at the time, would not allow any others to go scouting, rather he himself rode out alone on horseback and at full speed. [23] Happening upon three Goths on a steep slope, he at first took his stand with the intention of opposing them, for he was a man of extraordinary bravery, but upon seeing many men rushing toward him from all sides, he hastened to flee. [24] His horse stumbled in a rough place, whereupon a great shout arose from the enemy and they all hurled their javelins at him. Then the Romans, hearing this uproar, came to the rescue on the run.

[25] Ricila was killed, buried under a great number of spears, but the men of Thurimuth routed their opponents and, lifting up the body, carried it inside the city of Osimo. Thus did Ricila meet his death in a manner unworthy of his valor. [26] Then Sabinianos and Thurimuth in conference with Magnos found it inexpedient for them to spend any more time there, reasoning that they would never be a match for the enemy in battle owing to their numbers, and they would also use up the supplies of the besieged and make the city easier to capture by their opponents. [27] When this had been decided, they themselves and their thousand men began to prepare for departure, intending to start their journey at night; but one of the soldiers deserted secretly to the enemy camp and revealed the plans of the Romans. [28] Totila accordingly picked out two thousand men distinguished for their valor and, as night came on, set guards on the roads at a distance of thirty stades from Osimo, keeping his movements entirely secret. [29] So when these guards saw the enemy passing by at about midnight, they drew their swords and set to it. [30] They killed two hundred of them, but Sabinianos and Thurimuth, together with the rest, managed to escape in the darkness and flee into Rimini. [31] However, the Goths captured all the pack animals that were carrying the servants, weapons, and clothing of the soldiers.

[32] There are two fortresses on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, Pesaro and Fano, situated between the cities of Osimo and Rimini. At the start of this war, Vittigis had burned the houses in them and torn down their walls to about half their height, in order that the Romans might not seize them and make trouble for the Goths. [33] One of these fortresses, Pesaro, Belisarios decided to seize; for it seemed to him that the place was situated advantageously for the pasturage of horses. So he sent by night some of his associates and secretly obtained accurate measurements as to breadth and height of each of the gates. [34] He next had gates fashioned and bound with iron, loaded them on boats and sent them off, commanding the men of Sabinianos and Thurimuth to fit these gates quickly to the walls and then remain inside the circuit-wall; after securing their position, they were to build up in whatever way possible the parts of the circuit-wall that had fallen down, putting in stones, mud, and any other material whatsoever. So they carried out these instructions. [35] But Totila, upon hearing what was going on, came against them with a great army. [36] He made an attempt on the town and spent some time near it but, as he was unable to capture it, he returned empty-handed to his camp by Osimo. [37] The Romans, however, were no longer making sallies against the enemy, but at each fortress they were staying inside the walls. Moreover, even when *early 545* Belisarios sent two of his spearmen to Rome, Artasires, a Persian, and Barbation the Thracian, in order to assist Bessas in guarding the city, he instructed them not to make sallies against the enemy. [38] As for Totila and the Gothic army, they realized that the force of Belisarios was not sufficient to array itself against them and so decided to harass the strongest of the towns. [39] They accordingly made camp in Picenum before Fermo and Ascoli, and began a siege. And the winter drew to a close, and the tenth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[655]

655. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 544 to spring 545.

545 **12.** Now Belisarios, finding himself utterly unable to support the besieged towns, sent Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, to Byzantion, binding him by the most solemn oaths to make every effort to return as quickly as possible; and his mission was to beg the emperor to send them a large army and much money and, furthermore, both arms and horses. [2] For even the few soldiers he had were unwilling to fight, claiming that the state owed them much money and that they themselves lacked everything. [3] And this was true. Belisarios also wrote a letter to the emperor about these matters, and it said the following:

Belisarios to Justinian

> We have arrived in Italy, most mighty emperor, without men, horses, arms, or money, and no man, I think, would ever be able to carry on a war without a plentiful supply of these things. [4] For though we did travel most diligently through Thrace and Illyria, the soldiers we gathered are a small and pitiful band, without a single weapon in their hands, and altogether unpracticed in fighting. [5] Meanwhile, we see that the men who were left in Italy are both insufficient in number and in abject terror of the enemy, their spirit humbled by the many defeats they have suffered at their hands. These are not men who happened to escape by chance from their enemies, but they abandoned their horses and flung their weapons to the ground. [6] As for revenue, it is impossible for us to extract any money from Italy, as it has again been occupied by the enemy. [7] Consequently, we have fallen behind in payments to the soldiers and find ourselves unable to impose our orders upon them; for the debt has taken away our right to command. [8] This too you must know well, my master, that the majority of those serving in your armies have deserted to the enemy. [9] If it sufficed to merely send Belisarios to Italy, then you have made the best plan possible for the war, for I am already here in Italy. But if you want to overcome your foes in the war, it is necessary to make other provisions too. [10] For I think that no man can be a general without men to support him. It is therefore imperative that my spearmen and guardsmen should be sent to me and, beside them, a large force of Huns and other barbarians is needed, to whom money must be given immediately.

[11] Such was the letter written by Belisarios. But Ioannes, although he spent a long time in Byzantion, accomplished none of the goals of his mission; still, he married the daughter of Germanos, the nephew of the emperor.[656] [12] In the meantime Totila captured Fermo and Ascoli by surrender. He then went to Tuscany and began the siege of Spoleto and Assisi. Now the garrison in Spoleto was led by Herodianos and that in Assisi by Sisifrid, who, although a Goth by birth, was very loyal to the Romans and the emperor's cause. [13] Herodianos came to terms with the enemy, the agreement being that they would remain quiet for thirty days: [14] if no assistance came to the Romans

summer 545

656. At *Secret History* 5.7–13, Prokopios says that Theodora hated Germanos and wanted his children to remain unmarried. When Ioannes contracted this marriage, he began to fear that Theodora would kill him in Italy through her agents, which included Antonina, Belisarios' wife.

within that time, he was to surrender himself and the city together with the soldiers and inhabitants to the Goths. He furnished his son as a hostage for the keeping of this agreement. [15] So when the appointed day came and no Roman army had arrived from any direction, Herodianos and the whole garrison of Spoleto, in accordance with the agreement, put themselves and the city into the hands of Totila and the Goths. [16] But they say that the hostility between Herodianos and Belisarios was the real cause of his surrendering himself and Spoleto to the Goths; for Belisarios had threatened to call him to account for his previous actions.[657] Such, then, was the course of events at Spoleto. [17] Sisifrid, on the other hand, made a sally with his followers in which he lost most of his men and perished himself. [18] Thereupon the inhabitants of Assisi, being at a loss, immediately handed the city over to the enemy. Totila also sent to Kyprianos, demanding that he surrender Perugia to him, attempting to terrify him in case he disobeyed but promising, on the other hand, to reward him with much money if he complied. [19] But he made no progress with Kyprianos, so he bribed one of his spearmen, Ulifus by name, to kill him by treachery. [20] Ulifus accordingly, meeting Kyprianos by chance alone, killed him and fled to Totila. But nevertheless the soldiers of Kyprianos continued to guard the city for the emperor and so the Goths decided to pull back from Perugia.

13. After this Totila moved against Rome and, upon coming near the city, began a siege. *late*
He did no harm, however, to the farmers throughout all of Italy, but commanded them *545*
to continue tilling the soil without fear, just as they used to do, bringing to him the revenue that they had formerly brought to the public treasury and the owners of the land. [2] When some Goths had come close to the fortifications of Rome, Artasires and Barbation made a sally against them with a large number of their men, although Bessas did not at all approve their action. [3] They immediately killed many and turned the rest to flight. But in following these men and drawing out the pursuit over a great distance, they fell into an ambush set by the enemy. [4] Here they lost most of their men and they themselves, accompanied by a handful of men, only barely escaped. Thereafter they no longer dared to go out against their opponents, even if they were pressing their attack. [5] From this time on a severe famine afflicted the Romans, given that they were no longer able to bring in any supplies from the country and overseas traffic was cut off. [6] For after the Goths had captured Naples, they had stationed a navy of many light ships both there and at the so-called Aiolian Islands and other islands that lie off this coast, and with these they closely monitored the sea route. [7] Consequently, ships that put out from Sicily and started to sail to the harbor of Rome fell one and all into the hands of these patrols, along with their crews. [8] Totila now sent an army into Emilia with orders to take the city of Piacenza either by storm or by surrender. [9] This is the chief city in the land of Emilia and has strong defenses, being situated on the river Po, and it was the only city still left

657. At *Secret History* 5.5–6, Prokopios says that Belisarios had been trying to extract money from him with threats. Herodianos served with the Goths until at least 552.

in that region subject to the Romans. [10] So when this army came near Piacenza, they offered terms to the garrison there by which to hand the city over by surrender to Totila and the Goths. [11] But they met with no success and so they made camp on the spot and began a siege, perceiving that the people in the city lacked provisions.

[12] At that time there arose a suspicion of treason among the commanders of the emperor's army in Rome against Cethegus, a patrician and leader of the Roman senate.[658] For this reason he departed hastily for Centumcellae.[659] [13] But Belisarios became alarmed for Rome and the whole Roman cause and, because it was impossible to lend assistance from Ravenna in any case, especially with a small army, he decided to leave and take possession of the district about Rome, in order to be near at hand and be able to help those in difficulty there. [14] Indeed he repented ever having come to Ravenna at all, which he had done earlier through the persuasion of Vitalios and not to the advantage of the emperor's cause, for by shutting himself up in that place he gave the enemy a free hand to determine the course of the war as they wished. [15] And to me it seemed either that Belisarios had chosen the worse course because it was fated at that time for things to go badly for the Romans, or that he had in fact decided upon the better course but God had obstructed him in order to assist Totila and the Goths, so that the best of the plans of Belisarios had turned out utterly contrary to his expectations. [16] For those upon whom the wind of fortune blows favorably, even though they make the worst plans, encounter no difficulty, as a supernatural force leads them back and around to an entirely positive outcome. [17] But a man, I believe, who is under the ban of fortune is utterly unable to plan wisely, seeing as the fact that he is fated to suffer ill strips him of understanding and insight into the truth. [18] Even if he ever does make some plan suitable for the situation, Chance immediately blows against him after he has made it and perverts his wise purpose into the worst results. [19] Still, whether this is so or otherwise, I am unable to say.[660] Belisarios then appointed Ioustinos to command the garrison at Ravenna; he himself, with only a few men, journeyed through Dalmatia and the neighboring lands to Epidamnos, where he remained quiet expecting
early 546 an army from Byzantion. He wrote a letter to the emperor, reporting the situation. [20] The emperor, therefore, not long afterward sent him Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, and Isaakes the Armenian, the brother of Aratios and Narses, with an army of barbarian and Roman soldiers. [21] They reached Epidamnos and joined Belisarios. The emperor also sent Narses the eunuch to the rulers of the Heruls, to persuade most of them to march to Italy. [22] Many of the Heruls did follow him, commanded by Filimuth and certain others, and they came with him into the region of Thrace. Their intention was

658. Flavius Rufius Petronius Nicomachus Cethegus was consul in 504 as a young man. In the late 540s he fled to Constantinople, where he participated in ecclesiastical debates and urged Justinian to prosecute the war more vigorously; see 7.35.9–10. He later returned to Sicily (ca. 558).

659. Modern Civitavecchia.

660. For a similar long animadversion on the role of Chance in human affairs in connection with Belisarios' failed campaigns in Italy, see *Secret History* 4.42–45.

to pass the winter there and be sent on to Belisarios at the opening of the spring. [23] They were accompanied by Ioannes whom they called the Eater. And it so fell out that during this journey they unexpectedly rendered a great service to the Romans. [24] For a great throng of barbarian Slavs had recently crossed the river Danube, plundered the country there, and enslaved a great number of Romans. [25] The Heruls now suddenly fell upon these barbarians and joined battle with them, and, although far outnumbered, they unexpectedly defeated them. They slew them and released all the captives to go to their homes. [26] At that time also Narses found a certain man who was pretending to be Chilboudios, a man of note who had once been a general of the Romans, and he easily succeeded in unmasking the plot. I will explain what this was about.

14. There was a certain Chilboudios of the household of the emperor Justinian who was extremely energetic in war and so above wanting money that instead of being rich in his own right he had no possessions at all. [2] Chilboudios was appointed by the emperor in
the fourth year of his reign to be general of Thrace, and was assigned to guard the river *530*
Danube, being ordered to watch so that the barbarians of that region could no longer cross the river, given that Huns, Antai, and Slavs had already made the crossing many times and done irreparable harm to the Romans. [3] Chilboudios became such an object of terror to the barbarians that for the space of three years—that is for as long as he remained there in this office—not only did no one succeed in crossing the Danube against the Romans, but the Romans actually crossed over to the opposite side many times with Chilboudios and
killed and enslaved the barbarians there. [4] But three years later, when Chilboudios crossed *533*
the river, as was his custom, with a small force, the Slavs met him with their entire strength. [5] A fierce battle took place and many Romans fell, including the general Chilboudios. [6] Thereafter the river became free for the barbarians to cross at all times as they wished, and the possessions of the Romans were rendered easily accessible. The entire Roman empire found itself incapable of matching the valor of one man in the execution of this task.[661]

[7] Later on the Antai and Slavs became hostile to one another and came to blows, and it so fell out that the Antai were defeated by their opponents. [8] In this battle one of the Slavs took captive a young man of the enemy named Chilboudios, who was just growing his first beard, and took him off to his home. [9] This Chilboudios, as time passed, became extraordinarily devoted to his master and a vigorous warrior in dealing with the enemy. [10] Indeed, he exposed himself to danger many times to save his master and distinguished himself by his deeds of valor through which he succeeded in winning great renown. [11] At this time the Antai descended upon the land of Thrace and plundered and enslaved many of the Romans there, and they led these captives with them as they returned to their native land. [12] Now chance brought one of these captives into the hands of a kind and gentle master. But this man was a great crook and capable of deceiving the people he met in order to get his way. [13] As he was unable by any device to effect his return to Roman territory, much as he wished it, he conceived

661. In 533 Justinian began to use the title *Anticus* to indicate that his armies had conquered the Antai.

the following plan. Coming to his master, he praised him for his kindness and declared that on account of this God would bestow upon him many blessings, and that he, for his part, would show himself grateful to a most kindly master; but if only he was willing to listen to the excellent suggestion that he had to make, he would quickly put him in possession of a great sum of money. [14] There was, he said, among the nation of the Slavs one Chilboudios, the former general of the Romans, in the condition of a slave, while all the barbarians were ignorant as to who he really was. [15] If, therefore, he was willing to pay out the price set upon Chilboudios and convey the man to the land of the Romans, it was likely that he would receive from the emperor not only a good reputation but also an enormous amount of money. [16] By these words the Roman speedily persuaded his master, and he went with him among the Slavs, [17] for these barbarians had already made terms and were mingling with one another without fear. By paying out a large sum of money to the master of Chilboudios, they were able to purchase the man and then they departed with him immediately. When they had come into their own country, the buyer asked the man whether he was Chilboudios himself, the general of the Romans. [18] And he did not hesitate to state truly all the facts in order, saying that he too was by birth of the Antai and that while fighting with his compatriots against the Slavs, who were then at war with them, he had been captured by one of the enemy, but now, upon arriving in his native country, he too according to the law would be free from that time on. [19] The man who had paid out gold for him then became speechless with disappointment, as he had failed in a magnificent hope. [20] But the Roman, wishing to reassure the man and dodge the truth, so that no difficulty might arise to prevent his return home, still insisted that this man actually was that Chilboudios, but that he was afraid, clearly because he was in the midst of the barbarians, and so was unwilling to reveal the truth; if, however, he were to get into the land of the Romans, he would not only not conceal the truth, but in all likelihood would actually take pride in that very name. Now at first these things were done without the knowledge of the other barbarians.

[21] But when the report was carried about and reached everyone, practically all the Antai assembled to discuss the situation and they demanded that the matter be made public, thinking that a great benefit would come to them from the fact that they had now become masters of the Roman general Chilboudios. [22] For these nations, the Slavs and the Antai, are not ruled by one man but have lived of old under a democracy, and consequently everything that involves their welfare, whether for good or for ill, is a matter of common concern. In almost all other matters these two barbarian peoples have had the same institutions and beliefs from ancient times. [23] They believe that one god, the maker of lightning, is alone lord of all things, and they sacrifice to him cattle and all other victims; but as for fate, they neither know it nor in any way admit that it has power over men. Whenever they face death, either stricken with sickness or at the start of a war, they promise that, if they escape, they will immediately make a sacrifice to the god in exchange for their life; and if they escape, they sacrifice just what they have promised and consider that their safety has been bought with this same sacrifice.

[24] But they also revere rivers and nymphs and some other spirits, and they sacrifice to all these too, and they make their divinations in connection with these sacrifices. They live in pitiful hovels that they prop up far apart from one another, and, as a rule, every man is constantly changing his abode. [25] When they enter battle, the majority of them go against their enemy on foot carrying little shields and javelins in their hands, but they never wear breastplates. [26] Indeed, some of them do not even wear a shirt or a cloak, but hitch their trousers up by their private parts and so enter battle with their opponents. Both peoples have the same language, which is utterly barbarous. [27] Nor do they differ at all from each other in appearance. For they are all exceptionally tall and hardy men, while their bodies and hair are neither very fair or blonde, nor indeed do they incline entirely to the dark type, but they are all slightly ruddy in color. [28] They live a hard and unrefined life, just like the Massagetai, and, like them, they are at all times covered in filth; however, they are not malicious or evildoers, but preserve the Hunnic character in all its simplicity. [29] In fact, the Slavs and Antai had a single name in the remote past: they were both called Sporoi in ancient times, because, I suppose, living apart one man from another they inhabit their country in a sporadic fashion. [30] In consequence of this fact they hold a great amount of land, for they alone inhabit the greatest part of the northern bank of the Danube. So much then may be said regarding these peoples.[662]

[31] So on the present occasion the Antai gathered together, as has been said, and forced this man to agree with them that he was Chilboudios, the Roman general him-
self. And they threatened, if he denied it, to punish him. [32] But while this was trans- *545*
piring, the emperor Justinian had sent some envoys to these very barbarians, requesting that they all settle in an ancient city named Turris, which lies to the north of the river Danube.[663] This had been built by the Roman emperor Trajan in earlier times, but for long now it had remained unoccupied, after it had been plundered by the barbarians there. [33] It was this city and the lands around it that the emperor Justinian agreed to give them, asserting that it had belonged to the Romans originally; and he agreed to give them all the assistance within his power while they were jointly settling there, and to pay them great sums of money on condition that they remain at peace with him thereafter and constantly block the Huns, when the latter wished to overrun the Roman domain. [34] When the barbarians heard this, they approved it and promised to carry out all the conditions, provided that he restore Chilboudios to the office of general of the Romans and assign him to assist in the settlement of their city, insisting, what they
wished was so, that he was Chilboudios. [35] The man himself was lifted up by these *late*
hopes and began now to claim and assert, along with the rest, that he was Chilboudios *545–*
the Roman general. Indeed he was setting out for Byzantion on this very mission when *early*
Narses, in the course of his journey, came upon him. [36] And when he met the man *546*

662. Prokopios provides the first extant ethnography of the Slavs; it was probably among the sources used half a century later for the section on the Slavs in Maurikios, *Strategikon* 11.4.

663. Its location is not precisely known.

he found him to be an imposter, although he spoke in Latin, had already learned many of the mannerisms of Chilboudios, and was successful in imitating them. He confined him in prison and compelled him to confess the whole truth, and then brought him along to Byzantion. I now return to the point from which I digressed.

15. So the emperor was taking the measures that I described. Belisarios on his part sent an army to the harbor of Rome under the command of Valentinos and one of his own spearmen, Phokas by name, an exceptionally able warrior, with instructions to join the garrison at Portus commanded by Innokentios, and to assist them in guarding that fort; wherever possible, they were to make sallies and harass the enemy's camp. [2] Consequently, Valentinos and Phokas secretly sent a messenger into Rome to tell Bessas that they were at that moment about to make a sudden attack upon the stockade of their opponents; he too should select the most warlike of the soldiers in Rome and, when he observed their assault, rush to their assistance so that each of the two forces could inflict great injury upon the barbarians. [3] Bessas, however, disliked this plan, even though he had as many as three thousand soldiers under him. Thus it was that Valentinos and Phokas with a force of five hundred men descended unexpectedly upon the enemy's camp and killed a few men, and the commotion this created soon reached the ears of the besieged. [4] But as no one came out from the city against the camp, they quickly withdrew to the harbor without suffering any losses. [5] So they sent to Bessas a second time, accusing him of having had an inappropriate fit of timidity, and declared that they would soon make another assault on the enemy and urged that he too should fall upon the barbarians with all his strength at the right moment. [6] Bessas still refused to make a sally against his opponents and risk a battle. Yet the men of Valentinos and Phokas were, regardless, intending to attack the enemy in larger force and had already made their preparations. [7] But a certain soldier of Innokentios' command went as a deserter to Totila and reported that on the following day there would be an attack upon them from Portus. [8] So Totila decided to fill with ambushes of his most warlike soldiers all the places that were suitable for this purpose. On the next day, therefore, Valentinos and Phokas fell into these ambushes and not only lost most of their men, but were also killed themselves. Only a handful escaped with difficulty and returned to Portus.

[9] It was at this time that Vigilius, the chief priest of Rome, who was then residing in Sicily, filled with grain as many ships as he could and sent them off, thinking that in some way or other those who were conveying the cargoes would be able to get them into Rome. [10] So these ships were sailing toward the Roman harbor, but the enemy noticed them and got to the harbor a short time before the ships arrived. There they concealed themselves inside the walls so that, as soon as the ships came to land there, they might capture them with no difficulty. [11] When the men keeping guard in Portus observed this, they all went up to the battlements and by waving their cloaks strove to signal the men on the ships not to advance but to turn aside and go elsewhere—anywhere in fact, where chance might lead them. [12] But the men on the ships failed to understand this, supposing that the Romans in Portus were rejoicing and inviting them into the

harbor, and as they had a favoring wind they quickly got inside. [13] Now there were many Romans on the ships, and among them also a bishop named Valentinus. Then the barbarians arose from their hiding places and took possession of all the boats without encountering any resistance. [14] As for the bishop, they took him prisoner and led him before Totila, but all the rest they killed and, drawing the boats up on the shore with their cargoes still in them, they departed. [15] Totila interrogated this priest as he wished, and then accused him of not telling the truth in any respect and so cut off both his hands. [16] Such was the course of these events. And the winter drew to a close, and the eleventh year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[664]

16. Vigilius, the chief priest of Rome, came to Byzantion from Sicily summoned by the emperor. He had been waiting a considerable time in Sicily for this summons.[665] [2] It was at this time that the Romans besieged in Piacenza, when all their provisions had been completely exhausted, resorted under the constraint of famine to foods of a foul sort. [3] In fact they had actually tasted each other's flesh. Because of this they came to terms with the Goths and surrendered both themselves and Piacenza. Such was the course of events here. [4] At Rome too, as it was besieged by Totila, all the necessaries of life were already exhausted. [5] Now one of the priests of Rome, a certain deacon named Pelagius, had passed a considerable time in Byzantion and had there become a close friend of the emperor Justinian,[666] and it happened that he had arrived at Rome a short time previously with a great fortune. [6] During this siege he had bestowed most of this money upon those lacking the necessaries of life and thus, although he had been a notable person even before that time among all the Italians, now he naturally won still greater renown for philanthropy. [7] So the Romans, finding their situation desperate by reason of the famine, persuaded Pelagius to go before Totila and negotiate for them an armistice of only a few days, on condition that, if within the time of that armistice no help reached them from Byzantion, they would surrender both themselves and the city to the Goths. [8] Pelagius accordingly went on this mission to Totila. When he came, Totila greeted him with great respect and friendliness, and then spoke first as follows:

Totila to Pelagius

> [9] Among all barbarian peoples, or most of them, it is a law to respect the office of ambassadors, and I for my part have always been eager to honor particularly those, such as yourself, who lay claim to virtue. [10] Now it is my opinion that the distinction between honor and insult when it comes to an ambassador is not made by a smiling face or bombastic words on the part of those who receive him, but either by simply speaking the truth or by addressing him with insincere speeches. [11] For he is granted signal honor who has not been dismissed until

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664. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 545 to spring 546.

665. Pope Vigilius had been summoned to Constantinople in late 545 by Justinian because of his refusal to ratify the emperor's condemnation of the Three Chapters. He was delayed at Sicily for a long time and did not reach the capital until late 546 or early 547.

666. This Pelagius is the later pope (556–561).

the truth has been frankly revealed to him, but the greatest possible insult, on the other hand, has been heaped upon that ambassador who takes his departure after hearing only deceitful and insincere phrases. [12] Therefore, O Pelagius, with the exception of three things you will never fail to receive from us whatever you may ask. [13] These things, then, you had best avoid and pass by without mention, so that you may not blame us for your failure when in fact, in that case, you will have only yourself to blame for failing to accomplish the objects of your coming. [14] For making a request inappropriate to the situation is generally the cause of failing to accomplish anything. I warn you, then, that you are to make no plea on behalf of any Sicilian, or the circuit-walls of Rome, or the slaves who have put themselves under our protection. [15] For it is impossible either for the Goths to show any mercy to any Sicilian or for this wall to remain standing or for the slaves who have been serving in our army to return to the service of their former masters. And to avoid the appearance of making these demands arbitrarily, we will dispel that suspicion by stating our reasons immediately. [16] In the first case, then, that island was prosperous from ancient times, in terms of revenue and the abundance of the crops it produced, so that it not only provided enough for its own inhabitants but you Romans also were abundantly supplied by importing its produce annually as tribute. [17] It was for this reason that the Romans begged Theoderic at the beginning of his reign not to place a numerous garrison of Goths there, so that no limit might be put upon the freedom of the inhabitants or their general prosperity. [18] With that being so, the enemy's army put in at Sicily with a force that was a match for us neither in numbers nor any other respect. [19] But the Sicilians, seeing the fleet, did not report this to the Goths, did not shut themselves into their strongholds, did not decide to oppose our adversaries in any way, but opening the gates of their cities with all eagerness received the army of the enemy with open arms, just as I suppose the most untrustworthy slaves would do, who had for a long time been watching for a favorable moment to escape from the hands of their owners and find some new and unknown masters. [20] Then, by using that island as a base, the enemy, as if fighting from an advanced fortress, took all of Italy without difficulty and seized this city of Rome, having brought with them such a great quantity of grain from Sicily that, although they were besieged for an entire year, it sufficed for the whole population of the city. [21] So much, then, for the Sicilians; there is simply no way that the Goths will show them forgiveness, seeing that the gravity of the accusations sweeps away all compassion for the guilty. [22] In the second place, it was within these walls that our enemies shut themselves and from which they were quite unwilling to come down into the plain and array themselves against us, but by crafty devices and baffling tricks they deflected the Goths from day to day and thus became, quite undeservedly, masters of our possessions. [23] Consequently, it is crucial for us to ensure that we not have this experience again. For when men who have once met with a reverse through ignorance fall into the same misfortune again without having provided in advance against the calamity that has already become familiar to them by experience, people then believe that what has happened to them was no

> adversity of fortune but in all likelihood the result of the folly of the victims. [24] One might add that the destruction of the walls of Rome will benefit you above all others. For you will not again be shut in with these other people and excluded from all the necessaries of life while you suffer a siege at the hands of those who come against you, but, on the contrary, the two sides will stake their chances in open battle against one another, while you, without peril to yourselves, will simply become the prize of the victors. [25] In the third place, regarding the slaves who have put themselves under our protection, we will say only this, that if, after they have joined the ranks against our adversaries and have received from us the promise that we will never abandon them to their former masters, we now decide to put them into your hands, then we should not be trusted by you either. [26] For it is impossible—utterly impossible, I say—for a man whose commitment wavers in the agreements he has made with the most unfortunate of men to be reliable in dealing with anyone else; he always carries with him his untrustworthiness, just as he does any other characteristic that reveals his true nature in all his dealings with other men.

[27] That is what Totila said, and Pelagius replied as follows:

Pelagius to Totila

> Though you began, noble man, with the greatest respect for both me and the ambassadorial office, you have in fact assigned us to the very lowest grade of dishonor. [28] I for my part think that he who really insults one who is both friend and ambassador is not the man who strikes him on the head or otherwise maltreats him, but rather he who decides to allow his visitor to depart with his mission unaccomplished. [29] It is not in order to achieve any honor at the hands of those who receive them that men submit to the labors of an embassy, but in order to return with some good accomplished for those who sent them. [30] Thus, it is more in their interest to have been treated with contempt and yet still to have accomplished some of the objects for which they came, than, after hearing courteous words, to return disappointed in their hope. I have no idea what to say concerning those things that you yourself have mentioned. [31] For why should one pester a man who has refused an agreement before hearing the plea? This, however, I cannot leave unsaid, that it is clear what measure of kindness you intend to show to the Romans who have taken up arms against you, seeing that with regard to the Sicilians, who have not clashed with you at all, you have determined to vent your enmity upon them without mercy. [32] As for me, I give over my petition to you and refer my mission to God, who visits retribution upon those who scorn suppliants.

17. With such words Pelagius departed. When the Romans saw him returning empty-handed, they fell into a state of helpless despair. For the famine, becoming still more acute, was wreaking terrible havoc among them from day to day. The soldiers, however, had not yet exhausted their supplies and could still hold out. [2] The Romans therefore gathered in a throng and came before Bessas and Konon, the commanders of the emperor's army; there with weeping and lamentation they spoke to them as follows:

populace of Rome to Bessas and Konon

Generals, the fate that we see upon us at the present time is such that, if we actually had the power to commit some unholy deed against you, that crime would bring upon us no reproach. [3] For the overwhelming constraint of necessity by itself provides a sufficient defense. But, seeing that we are unable to defend ourselves, we have come before you to make our position clear and lament our misfortune. Do hear us gently and do not become stirred up by the boldness of our words, but measure it against the acuteness of our suffering. [4] For he who is forced to despair of safety can no longer control his actions, nor his words, so as to mind his manners. [5] As for us, generals, do not consider us to be either Romans or fellow countrymen of yours, or even to have assimilated our ways of government to yours; and do not suppose that in the beginning we received the emperor's army into the city willingly, but think of us as enemies from the start who took up arms against you and later, when defeated in battle, became your captive slaves according to the law of war. [6] So, now, give food to these your captives, if not in quantity sufficient for our needs, at least enough to make life possible, so that we too may survive and render you such service in return as is fitting for slaves to render their masters. [7] If you find this difficult or against your wish, then agree to release us from your hold, by which action you will gain this advantage, that you will not be troubled by the burial of your slaves. But if even this is not left us, then at least put us to death and do not deprive us of an honorable end nor begrudge us death, the sweetest of all things, and by a single act free the Romans from ten thousand troubles.

[8] When Bessas and his officers heard this, they asserted, firstly, that to furnish them with provisions was impossible; secondly, that to put them to death would be unholy; and, thirdly, that even to release them was risky. But they insisted that Belisarios with the army from Byzantion would arrive speedily, and after thus consoling them sent them away.

[9] But the famine became more severe and was greatly increasing its wasting effects, driving men to discover monstrous foods unknown to human nature. [10] Now at first, Bessas and Konon, who commanded the garrison in Rome, had, as it happened, stored away a vast supply of grain for their own use within the walls of Rome, and they as well as the soldiers were taking from the portion assigned for their own needs and selling it at great prices to the Romans who were rich; for the price of a *medimnos* had reached seven gold pieces. [11] But people whose private circumstances were such that they could not obtain food that was so expensive, were able, by paying one-fourth of this price, to have their *medimnoi* filled with bran; they ate this and necessity made it most sweet and tender. [12] As for beef, whenever the guardsmen of Bessas captured an ox in making a sally, they sold it for fifty gold pieces. And if any man had a horse or other animal that died, this Roman was counted among those extremely fortunate, as he was able to live luxuriously upon the flesh of a dead animal. [13] But all the rest of the populace were eating nettles only, which grow in abundance about the walls and among the ruins in all parts of the city. [14] In order to prevent the coarse herb from stinging their lips and throat they boiled them thoroughly before eating. [15] So long, then, as the Romans

had gold coins, they bought their grain and bran in the manner described and went on their way; but when their supply of this had at length failed, then they brought all their household goods to the forum and exchanged them for their daily sustenance. [16] But when, finally, the soldiers of the emperor had no grain that they could possibly sell to the Romans (except a little that Bessas still had left), nor did the Romans have anything left with which to buy, they all turned to the nettles. [17] But this food was insufficient for them, for it was impossible to satisfy themselves on it and consequently their flesh withered away almost entirely, while their color, gradually turning to a livid hue, made them look like images of themselves. [18] It happened to many that, even as they were walking along chewing the nettles with their teeth, death came suddenly upon them and they fell to the ground. They were already beginning to eat each other's dung. [19] There were many too who, pressured by the famine, killed themselves with their own hands, for they could no longer find either dogs or mice or any dead animal of any kind on which to feed. [20] There was a Roman in the city, the father of five children; and they gathered around him and, clutching at his clothes, kept demanding food. [21] But he, without a word of lament and without any sign that he was disturbed, but most steadfastly concealing all his suffering in his mind, told the children to follow him as if to get food. [22] When he came to the bridge over the Tiber, he tied his cloak over his face, concealing his eyes, and leaped from the bridge into the waters of the Tiber, the deed being seen by his children and all the Romans who were there. [23] From that time on the imperial commanders, upon receiving more money, released those Romans who desired to depart from the city. [24] Only a few were left in the city, for all the rest had fled in whatever way each was able. But most of them, as their strength had wasted away by the famine, perished as soon as they begun their journey, whether by water or land. [25] Many too were caught on the road by the enemy and killed. To such a pass had come the fortune of the senate and the people of Rome.

18. When the army under Ioannes and Isaakes had reached Epidamnos and joined Belisarios, Ioannes urged that they ferry everyone across the gulf and then proceed on foot with the whole army, meeting together whatever opposition might appear against them; but Belisarios considered this plan inexpedient and thought that more was to be gained by sailing to the region of Rome, [2] for in going by land they would waste a longer time and would perhaps face some obstacle. Ioannes meanwhile was to march through the land of the Calabrians and the other peoples of that region, drive out the few barbarians who were there, and, after reducing to submission the territory south of the Adriatic Sea, march to the area of Rome and rejoin the others. [3] It was here that Belisarios intended to land with the rest of the army. For he thought that, as the Romans were suffering most cruelly in the siege, even the smallest delay would likely bring disaster to their cause. [4] If they went by sea and met with a favorable wind, they might be able to put it at the harbor of Rome on the fifth day, while an army marching by land from Otranto could not reach Rome even within forty days. [5] So Belisarios gave these instructions to Ioannes and set sail from there with his whole fleet, but a

early 546

violent wind fell upon them and they had to put in at Otranto. [6] When the Goths who had been stationed there to besiege the fortress saw this fleet, they abandoned the siege and immediately went to the region of Brindisi, a city two days' journey distant from Otranto, situated on the coast of the sea and without walls, for they supposed that Belisarios would immediately pass through the strait at Otranto, and they reported their situation to Totila. [7] Totila put his own army in readiness to oppose Belisarios and commanded the Goths in Calabria to guard the passes as best they could. [8] But when Belisarios, finding a favorable wind, sailed away from Otranto, the Goths in Calabria thought no more of him and began to conduct themselves carelessly, while Totila was content to remain quiet and to guard still more closely the approaches to Rome, so that it would be impossible to bring any kind of provisions into it. [9] And he devised the following on the Tiber. Observing a place where the river flows in a narrow channel, about ninety stades distant from the city, he placed very long timbers, reaching from one bank to the other, so as to form a bridge at that point. [10] Then he constructed two wooden towers, one on either bank, and placed in each one a garrison of warlike men, so that it would no longer be possible for boats of any kind to make their way up from Portus and enter the city.

[11] Meanwhile, Belisarios landed at the harbor of Rome, while Ioannes with his army remained where he was. Then Ioannes ferried his force over to Calabria, quite unobserved by the Goths who, as stated above, were waiting in the region of Brindisi. [12] He captured two enemy scouts and killed the one immediately, but the other took hold of his knees and begged to be made a prisoner. [13] "I will not be useless to you or the Roman army," he said. When Ioannes asked him what advantage he could possibly bring to the Romans and him if he were spared, the man promised to enable him to fall upon the Goths when they were totally unprepared. [14] Ioannes declared that his plea would be granted, but first he must show him the pastures of their horses. This too the barbarian agreed to do and so he went with him. [15] First, upon finding the enemy's horses pasturing, all his men who happened to be on foot leaped upon their backs; and they were many and excellent men. Then they advanced at full speed against the camp of their opponents. [16] The barbarians were unarmed, entirely unprepared, and terror-stricken by the suddenness of the attack, so most of them were destroyed where they stood, forgetting even to put up a fight, and only a small number managed to escape and make their way to Totila. [17] Then Ioannes began to comfort and bridle all the Calabrians, trying to make them loyal to the emperor and promising that they would receive many benefits from the emperor and the Roman army. [18] Finally, departing as quickly as he could from Brindisi, he captured a city, Canosa by name, which lies approximately at the center of Apulia and is distant from Brindisi five days' journey as one goes west toward Rome. [19] Twenty-five stades away from this city of Canosa is Cannae, where they say that the Romans in early times suffered their great disaster at the hands of Hannibal, the general of the Libyans.

[20] In that city a certain Tullianus, son of Venantius, a Roman who possessed great power among the Brutii and Lucani, came before Ioannes and made accusations against

the emperor's army for the way they had previously treated the Italians, but he agreed that, if the army thereafter were to treat them with some degree of leniency, he would hand over the Bruttii and Lucani to the Romans, to be again subject and tributary to the emperor no less than they had been before. [21] It was not, he said, by their own will that they had sided with men who were barbarians and Arians, but because they had been forced by the enemy and had also been treated with injustice by the emperor's soldiers. [22] Upon Ioannes' declaration that thereafter the Italians would receive every blessing from the army, Tullianus went with him. [23] Because of this, the soldiers no longer entertained any suspicion as regards the Italians, but most of the territory south of the Adriatic Sea had become friendly to them and subject to the emperor.

[24] When Totila heard this, he selected three hundred of the Goths and sent them to Capua. He instructed them that, whenever they saw Ioannes' army marching from there toward Rome, they should simply follow him without drawing attention to themselves; he himself would take care of the rest. [25] Ioannes thereby became afraid that he might fall into some trap and be surrounded by the enemy, and so discontinued his movement to join Belisarios; instead he marched into the territory of the Bruttii and Lucani.[667] [26] Now there was a certain Recimund among the Goths, a man of note whom Totila had appointed to guard Bruttium; he had under him Goths as well as Roman soldiers and Moors who had deserted, and his instructions were to guard the Strait of Skylla and the coast there with these soldiers, so that no one might be able fearlessly to sail from there for Sicily nor to land there from the island. This army was surprised by Ioannes, whose presence had not been reported to them, [27] and he fell upon them at a point between Reggio and Vibo, stunned them by a sudden attack, and, as they made no move to resist, instantly routed them. [28] They sought refuge on the mountain that rises nearby, a difficult one to climb and generally steep; but Ioannes pursued them and reached the steep slopes along with the enemy; thus, before they had secured their position on the rough mountainside, he engaged with them and killed many of the Moors and Roman soldiers, although they offered a vigorous resistance, and captured by surrender Recimund, the Goths, and all who remained. [29] After this feat, Ioannes continued to remain where he was, while Belisarios, constantly expecting Ioannes, remained inactive. Belisarios kept reproaching him because he would not take the risk of meeting in battle the force on guard at Capua, only three hundred in number, or trying to force his way through in spite of the fact that he had barbarians under him who were selected for their valor. But Ioannes gave up on passing through and went to a place in Apulia called Cervaro, where he remained quiet.

19. Belisarios, therefore, fearing that the besieged might do something desperate *546*
because of the lack of provisions, began to think how to convey his supplies into Rome. [2] As he had no force sufficient to pit against the enemy and fight a decisive battle with

667. At *Secret History* 5.7–14, Prokopios reveals that Ioannes was reluctant to join Belisarios because he feared that Antonina might murder him on orders from Theodora, because he had contracted a marriage with Germanos' daughter.

them in the plain, he first devised the following. [3] He chose two skiffs of great breadth and, after fastening them together and lashing them firmly to each another, constructed a wooden tower upon them, making it much higher than those made by the enemy at their bridge.[668] [4] For he had previously measured them accurately by sending some of his men, who, it was made to appear, were deserting to the barbarians. [5] Next he built wooden walls upon two hundred dromons and launched them in the Tiber, opening holes in all parts of the wooden walls so that his men could shoot at the enemy through them. Finally, he loaded grain and many other kinds of provisions on these dromons and manned them with his most warlike soldiers. [6] He also stationed other soldiers, both infantry and cavalry, on either side of the river in some strong positions by the mouth of the Tiber, commanding them to remain at their posts and, if any of the enemy threatened Portus, to prevent them with all their strength. [7] But he stationed Isaakes inside Portus, and entrusted to him the city, his wife, and whatever else he happened to possess there. And he directed him to leave the city under no circumstances, not even if he learned that Belisarios had perished at the hand of the enemy, but to maintain a close and constant guard so that, if the Romans met any reverse, they might have a place to take refuge and save themselves. [8] For they held no other stronghold in that region; the whole country in every direction was hostile to them. [9] Then he himself embarked on one of the dromons and led the fleet, giving orders to tow the boats on which he had constructed the tower. [10] Now he had placed on top of the tower a little boat that he had caused to be filled with pitch, sulfur, resin, and all the other substances on which fire naturally feeds most fiercely. [11] On the other bank of the river—that on the right as one goes from Portus to Rome—a force of infantry was drawn up in support. [12] He had also sent word to Bessas the day before commanding that on the following day he was to make a sally with a strong force and throw the enemy's camp into confusion; in fact, this was the same command that he had already sent him many times before. [13] But neither on the previous occasions nor during the present battle did Bessas see fit to carry out his orders. [14] For now he was the only one who still had any grain left, as of all the grain that the magistrates of Sicily had previously sent to Rome to suffice both for the soldiers and the whole population, he had let an extremely small amount go to the populace while he kept for himself the largest part on the pretext of providing for the soldiers and had hidden it away; as he was selling this to the senators at high prices, he did not wish the siege to be broken.

[15] Belisarios and the Roman fleet were making their way upstream in spite of the difficulty caused by the adverse current. The Goths, however, offered no opposition, but remained quietly in their fortified camps. [16] But when the Romans came close to the bridge, they encountered a hostile guard that had been stationed on either side of the river to protect an iron chain which Totila had put in place there not long before; it reached from one bank of the Tiber to the other and its purpose was to make it difficult for the enemy to get even as far as the bridge. [17] They killed some of the guards with

668. 7.18.9–10.

their missiles and turned the rest to flight, then lifted out the chain and went straight on toward the bridge. As soon as they came up to it, they opened their attack, while the barbarians, shooting from the towers, were striving most vigorously to drive them back. [18] By this time the barbarians had risen up out from their camps and were rushing to the bridge. Just then Belisarios brought the skiffs, on which the tower had been built, as close as possible to one of the towers of the enemy—the one that stood on the road to Portus at the very edge of the water—and gave orders to set fire to the little boat and throw it on top of the enemy's tower. [19] And the Romans carried out this order. The little boat fell upon the tower and very quickly set fire to it, and not only was the tower itself consumed, but also all the Goths in it, to the number of about two hundred. [20] Among those burned was Osda, their commander, who was the most warlike of all the Goths. [21] Whereupon the Romans took courage and began to shoot even faster than before at the barbarians who had come to the support of their comrades. The latter were awestruck at this turn of events and, facing about, rushed off in flight, each man as best he could. The Romans then began to destroy the bridge and were ready, after wrecking it forthwith, to advance and proceed into Rome with no further opposition. [22] But as this was not the will of Chance, some envious spirit intervened and ruined the cause of the Romans in the following way.

[23] While the two armies were engaged in the operations just described, a report reached Portus that caused great harm to the Romans. It was that Belisarios was victorious and had taken up the chain after destroying the barbarians at that point, and all the rest that I told above. [24] When Isaakes heard this, he was no longer able to stay put but was eager to share in that glorious victory. So, disregarding the instructions of Belisarios, he was off as quickly as possible to the other side of the river. [25] He took with him a hundred horsemen from the soldiers that Belisarios had stationed there and advanced against the enemy's stockade, which was commanded by Ruderic, a capable warrior. [26] He made a sudden assault upon the barbarians in the camp and struck a number of them, including Ruderic, who had come out against him. [27] The Goths immediately abandoned the camp and withdrew, either because they supposed that Isaakes had a large hostile force in the rear, or by way of deceiving their opponents so that they might be able to capture them, as actually happened. [28] So Isaakes' men went into the hostile camp and began to plunder the silver that lay there and the other valuables. [29] But the Goths immediately turned around and slew many of them, but took Isaakes alive along with a few others. Horsemen then hastened to Belisarios and reported that Isaakes was in enemy hands. [30] Belisarios was thunderstruck at what he heard and, without investigating how Isaakes could have been captured, but thinking that both Portus and his wife were lost and that complete disaster had fallen upon the Romans, in that no other stronghold remained where they could now take refuge and save themselves, he fell into a state of aphasia, an experience he had never had before. [31] It was for this reason that he hastily withdrew his forces to the rear, with the intention of attacking the enemy while they were still in disorder and of recovering the town at all costs. So the Roman army withdrew from the bridge without accomplishing its

goal. [32] When Belisarios reached Portus, he learned of the madness of Isaakes and realized that his own agitation had been without reason; whereupon he was overcome with sorrow at this adversity of fortune and fell sick. [33] A fever came on that was protracted, afflicted him sorely, and brought him into danger of death. [34] Two days later it came about that Ruderic died and Totila, extremely grieved at his loss, killed Isaakes.

20. Meanwhile Bessas continued to grow wealthy by selling the grain, as his prices were fixed by the necessity of those who needed it. Being entirely consumed by this business, he paid no attention to the defense of the walls nor any security issue whatsoever, but any soldiers who wished were allowed to neglect their duties. In all this there was only an insignificant garrison on the walls, and even it was largely neglected. [2] For those who happened to be on guard duty on any day were freely permitted to sleep, as no one was put in charge of them who might make an issue of it. Nor did any officers see fit to make the rounds of the fortifications, as was customary, and inspect the guards to see what they were doing; furthermore, not one of the citizens was able to assist them in keeping guard, [3] for an extremely small number, as I said,[669] were left in the city and these were wasted to the last degree by the famine.

[4] So four Isaurians who were keeping guard by the Asinaria Gate waited carefully for that part of the night during which it was the turn of the soldiers next to them to sleep while the guarding of that section of the wall fell to them. Then they fastened ropes to the battlement long enough to reach down to the ground and, by laying hold of these with both hands, they got outside the fortifications. They went before Totila and agreed to receive him and the Gothic army into the city, and they declared that they were able to do this without any trouble. [5] Totila promised that he would be extremely grateful to them if they managed this and that he would give them great sums of money; he then sent with them two of his men to look over the place from which these men claimed that the Goths could effect entry into the city. [6] So this party came up to the wall and, laying hold of the ropes, ascended to the battlement, where not a man uttered a sound or observed what was going on. [7] When they reached the top, the Isaurians showed the barbarians everything, namely that those who wished to ascend would meet with no obstacle, and that after they had come up they would have complete freedom of action and no one would resist them; then, after instructing them to carry this report to Totila, they sent them away. [8] When Totila heard this report, he was, in a way, pleased at the intelligence but, notwithstanding this, he felt a suspicion toward the Isaurians and was not inclined to trust them much. [9] Not many days later these men came to him again, urging him to undertake the enterprise. Totila thereupon sent two other men with them, with instructions that they too should make a thorough investigation of the whole situation and report back. [10] These men, upon returning to him, made the same report as those previously sent. But during this time a large force of Roman soldiers who were out on reconnaissance, chanced upon ten Goths

669. 7.17.24.

going along a road not far from the city, and they took them prisoners and brought them directly before Bessas. [11] He asked these barbarians about Totila's plans, and the Goths said that he was in hopes that some of the Isaurians would deliver the city to him; for the story had already become known to many of the barbarians. [12] But even when Bessas and Konon heard this, they reacted with great unconcern and paid no attention. A third time the Isaurians came into the presence of Totila and tried to induce him. [13] He sent a number of men with them including one related to him by blood and they, upon returning to him, reported the whole situation and fired him up to proceed.

[14] Totila, then, as soon as it was night, put his whole force under arms in silence and led them up near the Asinaria Gate. He commanded four men who were noted among the Goths for their bravery and strength to climb up the ropes with the Isaurians to the battlements, during that part of the night, of course, when the Isaurians were supposed to be guarding that portion of the wall while the others took their turn at sleeping. [15] When they got inside the fortifications, they descended to the Asinaria Gate without meeting any opposition. There they shattered with axes the wooden beam with which they shut the gates by fitting it into recesses in the wall on either side, and also all the ironwork into which the guards inserted their keys to shut the gates or open them as needed. [16] Then they swung the gates open at will and without any trouble received Totila and the Gothic army into the city. But Totila collected his men there in one place and would not allow *17 Dec.*
them to scatter, for he feared that they would fall into an ambush set by the enemy. [17] *546*
Tumult and confusion, as was natural, fell upon the city and most of the Roman soldiers were fleeing with their commanders through another gate, each going wherever it was easiest, while only a few with the rest of the Romans sought refuge in the sanctuaries. [18] Among the patricians Decius and Basilius along with a few others (they happened to have horses) managed to escape with Bessas. [19] But Maximus, Olybrius, Orestes, and some others fled to the church of the Apostle Peter.[670] Among the common people, however, it so fell out that only five hundred men were left in the whole city, and these with difficulty found refuge in the sanctuaries. [20] The rest of the population was gone, some having departed to other lands and some having been carried off by the famine, as I explained.[671] Now many persons that night kept reporting to Totila that Bessas and the enemy were fleeing. But he, saying the report they had given was pleasing, would not permit a pursuit. [21] For what could be sweeter for a man, he said, than a fleeing enemy?

[22] When it was day and there was now no suspicion left of any ambush, Totila went to the church of the Apostle Peter to pray, but the Goths began to slay those who crossed their path. [23] In this manner there perished among the soldiers twenty-six and among the people sixty. When Totila arrived at the sanctuary, Pelagius came before him carrying the Christian scriptures in his hand and, making supplication in every way possible, said "Spare your own, master." [24] Totila, mocking him with a haughty air, said, "Now at

670. Decius was consul in 529; Flavius Anicius Faustus Albinus Basilius was consul in 541 (the last non-imperial holder of that office); Flavius Maximus was consul in 523; Olybrius was a patrician, possibly the consul in 526; and Rufius Gennadius Probus Orestes was consul in 530.

671. 7.17.9.

last, Pelagius, you have come as a suppliant to me." "Yes," replied Pelagius, "now that God has made me your slave. [25] But spare your slaves, master, from now on." Totila received this supplication with favor and forbade the Goths thereafter to kill any Roman, but he permitted them, while setting aside for him the most valuable of the property, to plunder all the rest for themselves at will. [26] He found much in the houses of patricians, but most of all in the house where Bessas had lodged. For that ill-starred despicable man had effectively been collecting for Totila the outrageous sums that, as explained above,[672] he had charged for the grain. [27] Thus the Romans in general, and particularly the members of the senate, found themselves so reduced that they wore the clothes of slaves and peasants and lived by for begging bread or other food from their enemies; a notable example of this was Rusticiana, the daughter of Symmachus and wife of Boethius, who was always lavishing her wealth on the needy.[673] [28] They went around to all the houses and kept knocking at the doors and begging to be given food, feeling no shame in doing so. [29] Now the Goths were eager to execute Rusticiana, bringing against her the charge that, after bribing the commanders of the Roman army, she had destroyed the statues of Theoderic in order to avenge the murder of her father Symmachus and husband Boethius.[674] [30] But Totila would not permit her to suffer any harm; he guarded both her and all the other women from insult, although the Goths were eager to take them to bed. [31] Consequently not one of them suffered any bodily insult, whether married, unwed, or widow, and Totila won great renown for moderation from this policy.

21. On the next day Totila gathered all the Goths and spoke as follows:

Totila to the Goths

Fellow soldiers, I have not brought you together in this place to make any new or unknown exhortation to you but to say those very things that I have often said to you and that you, for your part, have heeded and so reaped the greatest of blessings. [2] Do not, then, disregard this present exhortation. [3] For when words lead to good fortune, men should not get enough of them, even if the speaker seems to wear out his audience with so much speaking, for they cannot reasonably reject the benefit gained from such words. [4] I say, then, that in the past we assembled a host of two hundred thousand warlike soldiers; we had at our disposal enormous wealth and could display an abundance of both horses and arms; we had a large group of elders of the greatest prudence, a thing considered most advantageous for those entering a war; and yet still we were defeated by seven thousand Graeci and, for no good reason, were stripped of our power and everything else that was ours. [5] But now that we were reduced to a small number, unarmed and pitiable, and without any experience, we have prevailed over an enemy more than twenty thousand strong. [6] Our experience, then, to put it in a word, has been such. I will now state to you the causes of this outcome, although you know them well. The Goths in earlier times paid less heed to justice than to anything else and treated

672. 7.17.10–11, 7.20.1.

673. Boethius praised her in the *Consolation of Philosophy* 2.4.6.

674. 5.1.32–39.

each other and their Roman subjects in an unholy way. It was because of this that God was moved to take the field against them on the side of their enemies. [7] So, although we were far superior to our opponents in numbers and valor and the general equipment for war, we were defeated by an invisible and obscure power. [8] It therefore rests with you to guard these blessings, manifestly by upholding justice. If you change your course, God too will instantly become hostile to you. [9] For he does not side with a particular race of men or nation, but with those who show the greater honor to justice. For him it is no labor to transfer his blessings from one people to the other. [10] To avoid injustice is solely a function of man's will, but God by his nature has all things in his power. [11] I say, therefore, that you must observe justice strictly both in your dealings with each other and your subjects. It would amount to the same thing to tell you to preserve your good fortune forever.

[12] After Totila had made this speech to the Goths, he also called together the members of the Roman senate and reproached and abused them at length, saying that they had received many benefits from both Theoderic and Athalaric, had always been appointed to the chief offices throughout the kingdom, had governed the state, and had, furthermore, amassed vast wealth, and yet they had acted with such ingratitude toward the Goths, their benefactors, that they had improperly planned a revolt to their own detriment and brought in the Graeci to attack their fatherland, thus turning traitors to themselves on the spur of the moment. [13] He asked them whether they had ever suffered any personal harm at the hands of the Goths, [14] and then forced them to state whether any good thing had come to them from the emperor Justinian, reviewing all that had happened in order: first, they had been stripped of practically all the offices; second, they had been maltreated by the *logothetai*, as they were called, being forced to settle accounts for their dealings with the Goths while they were in office;[675] and, third, although they were suffering from the war, they were having to pay the Graeci not a bit less in public taxes than in times of peace. He included many other things too in his speech, things that an angry master might say in upbraiding men who have become his slaves. [15] Then he placed before them Herodianos and the Isaurians who had handed the city over to him, and said: "You, who have been reared together with the Goths, have not up to the present day seen fit to surrender to us even one empty town, but these men have received us into Rome itself and Spoleto.[676] [16] For this you have been reduced to the rank of household slaves, while these men, who have proved themselves friends and kinsmen of the Goths, will hold your offices from here on." [17] When the patricians heard this, they sat in silence. But Pelagius began to plead with Totila for these men who had made a mistake and suffered misfortune, and would not let him go until he had promised to treat them kindly, and thus sent them away.

[18] After this he sent Pelagius and one of the Roman orators, Theodorus by name, as envoys to the emperor Justinian, having bound them by most solemn oaths that they would remain loyal to him and would make every effort to return to Italy as quickly as

675. 7.1.28–32.

676. 7.12.12–16.

possible. [19] He instructed them to use all their strength to secure peace for him from the emperor, so that he would not have to raze Rome entirely to the ground, kill the members of the senate, and carry the war into Illyria. And he also wrote a letter to the emperor Justinian. [20] Now the emperor had already heard what had happened in Italy. But when the envoys came before him, they delivered the message that Totila had instructed them to bring and put the letter into his hands. [21] The contents of the letter were as follows:

Totila to Justinian

> As to what has transpired in the city of Rome, I suppose you have learned everything, so I have decided to remain silent. [22] But as to the purpose for which I have sent these envoys, you will now learn. We request that you, for your part, opt for the advantages that come from peace and also grant them to us. [23] We know what they are from the most beautiful examples of Anastasios and Theoderic, who reigned not long ago and filled their whole era with peace and prosperity. [24] If you ever choose these things, you would properly be called my father and you would also have us hereafter as allies against whomever you want.

[25] When the emperor Justinian saw this letter brought to him and heard all the words of the envoys, he dismissed them instantly, giving them only this reply and writing it to Totila, that he had made Belisarios supreme commander in the war and that he, then, had full power to make any settlement with Totila that he wished.

late 546–early 547

22. But while these envoys were traveling to Byzantion and then returning to Italy, the following events took place in Lucania. [2] Tullianus gathered the peasants of that area and set a guard upon the pass, which was very narrow, in order to prevent the enemy from entering to devastate the land of Lucania. [3] And three hundred Antai were also helping them to keep guard, whom Ioannes had left there previously, as it happened, at the request of Tullianus; for these barbarians excel all others in their ability to fight on rough ground. [4] When Totila learned this, he considered it inexpedient to assign Goths to the task, so he gathered a multitude of peasants and sent them with very few Goths and orders to try with all their strength to force the pass. [5] When these two forces engaged in battle, each side was violently striving to force the other back, but the Antai by their valor, and also because the very roughness of the ground was to their advantage, together with the peasants under Tullianus turned their opponents to flight; *early 547* [6] and a great slaughter of them occurred. When Totila learned this, he decided first to raze Rome to the ground and then, while leaving most of his army in that area, to march with the rest against Ioannes and the Lucanians. [7] Accordingly he tore down the walls in many places by about a third of their height. He was on the point of burning the finest and most noteworthy buildings and making Rome into a sheep pasture, but Belisarios learned this and sent envoys with a letter to him. [8] When they came before Totila, they stated why they had come and delivered the letter, which said the following:

Belisarios to Totila

> To make a city beautiful that was not so before is the work of men of wisdom who understand the meaning of civilization, but the destruction of beauty that already exists is the mark of men who lack understanding and are not ashamed to leave to

> posterity this token of their character. [9] Among all cities under the sun Rome is agreed to be the greatest and most noteworthy.[677] [10] For it has not been created by the ability of one man, nor has it attained such greatness and beauty by a power of short duration, but a multitude of emperors, many companies of the best men, a great lapse of time, and an extraordinary abundance of wealth were required to bring together here all other things that are in the whole world, and skilled workers besides.[678] [11] Thus, little by little, have they built the city such as you see it, leaving to future generations memorials of their ability, so that any insult to these monuments would rightly be considered a great crime against the whole of humanity; [12] for by such an action the men of former generations are robbed of the memorials of their virtue, and future generations of the sight of their works. [13] Given that this is so, know this well, that one of two things must necessarily take place: either you will be defeated by the emperor in this struggle or, should it so fall out, you will triumph over him. [14] In the case that you win, if you dismantle Rome, you would not have destroyed the possession of some other man, but your own city, good sir, and, if you preserve it, you will enrich yourself by the fairest possession of all. Yet if it so happens that you receive the worse fortune, in saving Rome you would earn a great gratitude on the part of the victor, but by destroying the city you preclude making any plea for mercy and, in addition to this, you will have reaped no actual benefit from the deed. [15] Furthermore, you will leave to all men a reputation that corresponds with your deed, and it stands waiting for you depending on how you decide. [16] The reputation that rulers earn is necessarily determined by the quality of their actions.

Such was the letter of Belisarios. [17] Totila read it over many times and, accurately understanding the significance of the advice, was persuaded and did Rome no further harm. He indicated his decision to Belisarios and immediately dismissed the envoys. [18] He commanded the main body of the army to encamp not far from Rome at the town of Algedon,[679] which is about 120 stades distant from the city toward the west, and to remain quietly there, to block the soldiers of Belisarios from having the freedom to go anywhere outside Portus. With the rest of the army he himself marched against Ioannes and the Lucani. [19] As for the Romans, he kept the members of the senate with him, while all the others he sent into Campania with their wives and children, refusing to allow a single person in Rome, but leaving it entirely deserted.

[20] When Ioannes learned that Totila was marching against him, he refused to remain any longer in Apulia but went hastily to Otranto. Now the patricians who were being taken into Campania sent certain of their servants into Lucania, by order of Totila, and instructed their tenants to stop what they were doing and till the fields as always; for, the message said, they could have their masters' property. [21] So they

677. Cf. Isokrates, *Panegyrikos* 23, for the same language (about Athens).

678. Cf. Dionysios of Halikarnassos, *Roman Antiquities* 1.2.1, for Prokopios' possible source here; also Ailios Aristeides, *On Rome* 11–13, for all good things being conveyed to Rome.

679. This location is unknown; Algido is to the southeast of Rome.

detached themselves from the Roman army and remained quietly on their lands, whereupon Tullianus fled and the three hundred Antai decided to follow Ioannes in his retreat. [22] Thus the whole territory south of the Adriatic Sea, excepting Otranto, became once more subject to the Goths and Totila. By now the barbarians were filled with confidence and, scattering in small bands, began to overrun the whole country. [23] When Ioannes learned this, he sent many of his men against them. This force, falling unexpectedly upon the enemy, killed a large number. [24] As a result of this experience, Totila became cautious and gathered all his men together in the neighborhood of Mount Gargano, which rises near the center of Apulia, and, encamping in the fortified enclosure of Hannibal the Libyan, remained quiet.

23. At this time one of the men who had fled from Rome with Konon while the city was being captured—he was named Martinianos, from Byzantion—came before Belisarios and asked permission to go to the enemy pretending to be a deserter, and he promised to do the Romans a great service. As this met with Belisarios' approval, he went off. When Totila saw him, he was extremely pleased. [2] For he heard that the youth had won fame in single combat and he had also seen him many times. The man had two children and his wife among the captives, so Totila immediately restored to him his wife and one of the children, but the other he continued to guard as a hostage, and sent Martinianos to Spoleto with a few others. [3] Now it so happened that when the Goths captured Spoleto by the surrender of Herodianos, they had razed the whole circuit-wall of the city to the ground but had thoroughly walled up the entrances of the hunting arena before the city, which is called an amphitheater, and established in it a garrison of both Goths and Roman deserters, for the purpose of guarding the area all around. [4] When Martinianos came to Spoleto, he managed to win the friendship of fifteen soldiers whom he persuaded to return to the Roman army after accomplishing a great exploit against the barbarians. [5] He also sent some men to the commander of the garrison in Perugia, telling him to send an army to him at Spoleto with all speed, explaining to him the whole situation. [6] Now the garrison at Perugia was at that time commanded by Odolgan, a Hun, for Kyprianos had been treacherously removed from the world, as I stated above, by one of his own spearmen.[680] And he came with an army to Spoleto. [7] Then, when Martinianos ascertained that this army was close, he and the fifteen soldiers suddenly slew the commander of the garrison and, opening the gates, received all the Romans into the fortress. They killed most of the enemy but they made some prisoners and brought them before Belisarios.

spring 547 [8] Shortly after this Belisarios had the idea to go up to Rome and see into what condition it had fallen. He selected a thousand of his soldiers and went. [9] But a man of Rome went in haste to the enemy who were encamped at Algedon, and reported the presence of Belisarios' army. [10] The barbarians seeded the district in front of Rome with several ambushes and, when they saw that the force of Belisarios had come close,

680. 7.12.20.

they rose from their places of ambush and attacked them. [11] A fierce battle ensued, in which the Romans by their valor routed their enemy and, after killing most of them, withdrew immediately to Portus. Such was the course of events there.

[12] There is a coastal city in Calabria called Taranto, about two days' journey distant from Otranto, on the road from there to Thurii and Reggio. [13] Ioannes came there with a few men at the invitation of the Tarentines, leaving the rest to guard Otranto. [14] When he saw that this city was extremely large and entirely unwalled, he thought that he would be utterly unable to defend the whole of it; but he observed that the sea to the north of the city formed a bay on either side of a very narrow strip of land, where the port of Taranto is situated, and thus the space between the bays forms an isthmus for a distance of not less than twenty stades, so he formed the following plan. [15] He cut off from the rest of the city the part that lay on the isthmus, and enclosed it by means of a wall extending from one bay to the other, and along the wall he dug a deep trench. [16] There he gathered not only the Tarentines but also all the inhabitants of the surrounding country, and he left them a garrison of considerable size. [17] In this way all the Calabrians were now in a secure position and they consequently intended to revolt from the Goths. Such was the course of events there. [18] Totila, for his part, occupied a strong fortress in Lucania, situated close to the boundaries of Calabria, called Acerenza by the Romans. After establishing there a garrison of not less than four hundred men, he himself with the rest of his army marched against Ravenna, leaving in Campania some of the barbarians with orders to guard the Roman prisoners, the members of the senate being there too.

24. At that time Belisarios conceived a daring and farseeing plan, which seemed insane to those who first saw and heard of his actions, but its outcome proved to be a splendid achievement of virtue and almost supernaturally magnificent. [2] Leaving behind only a few of his soldiers to guard Portus, he went himself with the rest of his army to Rome with the intention of trying with all his strength to regain it. [3] As he was unable in a short time to rebuild all the parts of the wall that Totila had torn down, he did as follows. [4] Gathering stones that lay close by, he threw them on top of each other in a jumble, without anything at all between them as he had neither lime nor anything else of the sort, but caring only that the face of the masonry should be preserved, and he set a great quantity of stakes outside. [5] Now he had previously, as it happened, dug deep trenches around the entire circuit-wall, as stated in a previous book.[681] [6] The whole army carried out this work with unbounded enthusiasm, so in twenty-five days the parts of the fortifications that had been torn down were finished in this manner. [7] All the Romans who lived in the area gathered in the city, both because they wanted to live in Rome and because they had for a time been short of supplies and found there an abundance; for Belisarios had been able to bring this about by loading a great number of boats with all manner of provisions and bringing them up to Rome by the river.

681. 5.14.15.

[8] When Totila heard this, he immediately set his whole army in motion and marched against Belisarios and Rome before Belisarios had been able to fit the gates to the wall. [9] For it so happened that Totila had destroyed them all, and Belisarios had not yet managed to have them built because of the lack of craftsmen. [10] When the barbarian army came near the city, they encamped and bivouacked on the bank of the Tiber, but on the following day at sunrise they advanced against the walls, filled with great fury and shouting as they came. [11] But Belisarios had selected the most warlike of his soldiers and stationed them in the open gateways, commanding the rest to stand above and fight off the assailants from the wall with all their force. [12] So a fierce battle ensued, for the barbarians hoped that they would capture the city at the first charge, but as the attempt proved difficult and the Romans offered a most vigorous resistance, they gave way to rage and began to press upon the enemy, their fury inspiring them to daring beyond their strength. [13] The Romans, meanwhile, resisted with unexpected determination, the danger arousing them to bravery. [14] Then a great slaughter of the barbarians took place, as they were being shot at from above, and both armies were becoming weary and distressed; the battle, which had begun in the morning, ended at night. [15] The barbarians returned to their camps and passed the night there, caring for their wounded. As for the Romans, some were keeping guard on the wall, while others, who were the men most conspicuous of all for their bravery, were guarding the open gateways in shifts, having placed *triboloi* [caltrops] in front of them in great numbers, in case the enemy made a surprise attack upon them. [16] These *triboloi* are as follows. Four spikes of equal length are fastened together at their butts so that their points form the outline of a triangle on every side. [17] They throw these at random on the ground and, because of their shape, three of the spikes plant themselves firmly upon the ground while the remaining one stands up alone and is a fixed obstacle for both men and horses. [18] When anyone rolls one of these *triboloi* over, the spike that was previously pointing up in the air is now planted in the ground while another one takes its place above, as an obstacle to those who wish to advance to the attack. That is what *triboloi* are. So both sides bivouacked thus after the battle.

[19] On the following day Totila decided to storm the wall again with his whole army, and the Romans held the defense in the manner described. Gaining the upper hand in the engagement, they gathered their courage to make a sally against the enemy. [20] As the barbarians retreated, some of the Romans, in pursuing them, went far from the fortifications. The barbarians were on the point of surrounding them so that they might be unable to return to the city. But Belisarios, noting what was taking place, sent a large number of his men to that point and thus succeeded in rescuing the force. [21] After being repulsed in this way the barbarians withdrew, having lost many of their able fighting men and bringing with them many wounded to their camp. [22] There they remained quiet, caring for their wounds and attending to their arms, many of which had now been destroyed, and putting everything else in readiness. Many days later they again advanced against the wall with the purpose of storming it. [23] But the Romans came out to meet them and joined battle. By some chance the man who was bearing the

standard of Totila was mortally wounded and not only fell from his horse but also threw the standard to the ground. [24] Thereupon the Romans who were fighting at the front charged in order to seize the standard and the corpse. But the most courageous barbarians got there first, seized the standard, and also cut off the left hand of the corpse and took it with them. [25] For the fallen man was wearing upon this hand an impressive bracelet of gold and they did not want their opponents to exult over it, so they sought in this way to avoid the disgrace that its loss would involve. [26] Then the barbarian army was routed in complete disorder, while the Romans despoiled what was left of the corpse and, in pursuing the enemy to a great distance, killed many of them, and then returned to the city without any loss.

[27] Then all the notable Goths came to Totila and abused and reproached him mercilessly for his bad choices. After capturing Rome, they said, he had neither leveled the whole city to the ground so that it might be no longer possible for the enemy to take over, nor had himself held it, but what they had accomplished at a great expense of labor and time, this he himself had undone for no good reason. [28] It is innate in men to adjust their judgments always to the outcome of events and to allow their mind to be borne along by the current of fortune, changing their opinion instantly as a result of this.[682] [29] Thus, while Totila was succeeding in his undertakings, the Goths had revered him equally with God, calling him an unvanquished and invincible leader, at the time when he allowed them to destroy only a part of the defenses of captured cities; but when he met with the reverse just mentioned, they did not feel it improper to insult him, forgetting what they had recently said about him, in fact going contrary to those statements without any hesitation. [30] But it is not possible for people *not* to commit these mistakes and others like them, as they are due to human nature. [31] So Totila and his barbarians broke up the siege and went to the city of Tivoli, tearing down almost all the bridges over the Tiber so that it might not be easy for the Romans to make an attack upon them. [32] One bridge, however, that bears the name Milvian, they were unable to destroy, as it was too close to the city. They decided to rebuild the fortress in Tivoli with all their effort, for they had dismantled it previously; [33] and they deposited there all their valuables and remained quiet. [34] As for Belisarios, having now less cause for fear, he fitted gates to the circuit-wall of Rome on every side, bound them with iron, and once more sent the keys to the emperor. And the winter drew to a close, and the twelfth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[683] *546–547*

25. Long before this Totila had, as it happened, sent an army against Perugia, and they had encamped about the circuit-wall of the city and were maintaining a close siege of the Romans there. [2] Perceiving that the city was scantily supplied, they sent to Totila and begged him to come there with his whole army, thinking that they would thus capture Perugia and the Romans in it with less difficulty and labor. [3] But Totila saw

682. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 1.140.

683. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 546 to spring 547.

that the barbarians were not eager to carry out his orders, and he wanted to deliver an exhortation to them. [4] Therefore, he called them all together and spoke as follows:

Totila to the Goths

I have noticed, fellow soldiers, that you are unjustifiably angry toward me and that you bitterly resent the adversity of fortune that has befallen us;[684] for this reason I have decided to bring you here together, in order to remove from your minds an impression that is absolutely wrong and bring you back to a better opinion; and also so that you may appear neither to be ungrateful to me, which hardly suits you, nor to be led by bad motives to be ungrateful to God. [5] For it is in the very nature of human affairs that failure must come at times,[685] and when any man, being only human, shows himself rebellious against what is happening, he will naturally acquire a reputation for stupidity, and yet still he will not escape the necessity that chance has laid upon him. [6] I want to remind you of previous events, not so much to absolve myself from blame for what happened as to demonstrate that it may with more justice be laid upon *you*. [7] For when Vittigis was entering upon this war at the beginning, he did indeed tear down the walls of the coastal towns Fano and Pesaro, but Rome and all the other cities of Italy he exempted, not damaging them in the least. [8] Consequently, while no trouble has come to the Goths from Fano and Pesaro, it was because of the circuit-walls of Rome and its other fortified places that trouble came to the Goths and Vittigis in the way that is well known to you. [9] Accordingly, when I accepted the royal power that you offered, I reasoned that I should emulate those deeds that had come to be regarded as better for us rather than to damage our cause by doing things that had harmed us. [10] For while men do not seem to differ greatly from each other in their nature,[686] some have been taught by experience, whose lessons make him superior in every way to those who have not been taught by it. [11] Accordingly, when we captured Benevento, we pulled down its walls and immediately captured the other towns, whose circuit-walls we decided to pull down in the same way, in order that the enemy's army might not be able, by using them as strongholds, to carry on the war by stratagem but should be compelled to come down to the plain and engage directly with us there. [12] So while they were fleeing, I was giving orders to raze the cities that were captured. [13] And you, marveling at my good judgment, carried out this decision, and so, it would seem, made my actions your own. For he who praises the man who has done some deed becomes himself the agent of the deed no less than the other. [14] But now you have reversed your position, my dearest Goths, simply because it has come about that Belisarios, by adopting a course of unreasonable daring, unexpectedly accomplished the object for which he strove, and as a result you are astounded at the man as a marvel of courage. [15] For men of daring are called courageous more commonly than men of foresight are called

684. Cf. Perikles in Thucydides, *History* 2.59.3.

685. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 2.64.3.

686. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 1.84.4.

secure. The reason is that he who displays daring beyond the normal bounds is honored with the name and fame of an energetic man, whereas he who avoids danger with careful judgment and yet fails earns blame for what happened and, even if he accomplishes his purpose, he still seems, to foolish men at any rate, to have accomplished nothing by himself. [16] Apart from this, you do not realize that you are angry with me on account of things that, in reality, are making you disappointed in *yourselves* just now. Or do you really believe that Belisarios prevailed against *you*—who, when reduced to prisoners of war and runaway slaves, took up arms under me as your general and proved yourselves able many times to overcome him in battle? [17] Yet if it was through my merit that you succeeded in accomplishing those things, out of respect for that merit you ought to be silent, remembering that nothing remains fixed in men's reverses; and if, on the other hand, it was some chance that bestowed that victory upon you, it will profit you more to revere her rather than to show anger, so that you may not be forced to learn the true meaning of her favor through failure. [18] Indeed, how could it not appear inconsistent with a prudent character that men who have achieved for themselves many great successes not long ago and have now met with a slight reverse allow their pride to be thus humbled? Such an attitude means purely and simply this, that you obstinately refuse to acknowledge that you are human. [19] For never to make mistakes can be said only of God. Consequently, you must abandon this attitude and with all enthusiasm attack the enemy in Perugia. If you manage to capture them, Fortune will again smile upon you. [20] For events that have already happened can never be undone in all eternity, but when new successes come to those who have met with reverse, the memory of evil days becomes lighter. You will achieve mastery over Perugia without trouble. [21] For Kyprianos, who commanded the Romans there, was done away with by Fortune, coupled with our planning, and an ungoverned multitude is incapable of fighting bravely, especially when poorly supplied. [22] Nor will anyone harm us from the rear; for not only have I seen fit to destroy the bridges over the river with this purpose, that we suffer no loss from unexpected assaults, but it is also true that Belisarios and Ioannes are regarding each other with suspicion, as one can infer from previous events. [23] The conflict of these men's judgments is clearly shown by their actions. This is the reason why they have not been able to join forces with each other up to this time. Their mutual suspicion keeps them apart, and those who have this feeling are bound to harbor envy and hostility too. [24] When these passions divide men, they cannot take any necessary action.

After this speech, Totila led his army against Perugia and, upon their arrival at that city, they made camp close to the circuit-wall and established themselves for a siege.

26. While these events were taking place, Ioannes was besieging the fort of Acerenza. He was not making any progress so he conceived a daring plan, which not only rescued the Roman senate but also brought him great—no, extraordinary—fame among all men. [2] Upon hearing that Totila and the Gothic army were assaulting the fortifications of Rome,

he chose the best of his horsemen and, without announcing his plan to anyone, rode with them into Campania (for Totila had, as it happened, left the members of the senate there). He rested neither day nor night so that, by making an unexpected attack, he might be able to snatch and rescue the senators, seeing as the towns there were entirely without defenses. [3] Now it so happened at that very time that Totila began to be alarmed that some of the enemy might come to rescue the prisoners, as in fact they did, and he had accordingly sent an army of cavalry to Campania. [4] Now when they reached the city of Minturno, they decided that the better course for them was for the main body to remain quietly there and care for their horses (which had become greatly fatigued on this journey), while they sent a few scouts to investigate the situation at Capua and the adjoining towns. The distance between the two places is not more than three hundred stades. [5] Accordingly they sent forward as scouts four hundred men whose horses were unwearied and whose strength was still unimpaired. [6] And it so fell out by some chance that on that very day, at the same time, both Ioannes and his army and these four hundred barbarians reached Capua, neither having heard anything previously of their opponents. [7] Thereupon a fierce battle ensued on the spur of the moment, for no sooner did they see each other than they began fighting. The Romans won a decisive victory and killed most of the enemy immediately. [8] Only a few of the barbarians were able to escape, and they reached Minturno in rapid flight. When the others saw these men, some dripping with blood, some still carrying the missiles in their bodies, and others refusing to speak a word or give any account of what had happened but still persisting in their retreat and openly displaying the terror that was in them, they leaped upon their horses immediately and joined in the flight. [9] When they came before Totila, they reported that there was a vast host of the enemy, seeking in this way to remove the shame of their flight. [10] It so happened that not less than seventy Roman soldiers of those who had previously deserted to the Goths were on their way into the towns of Campania, and these men decided to go over to Ioannes. [11] Ioannes found there only a few of the members of the senate, but almost all their wives. [12] For during the capture of Rome many of the men had followed the soldiers in flight and reached Portus, but the women were all captured. [13] Clementinus, however, a patrician, took refuge in one of the temples there and refused absolutely to follow the Roman army, for he had previously handed over to Totila and the Goths a stronghold close to Naples, and reasonably dreaded the wrath of the emperor. On the other hand, Orestes, who had been consul of the Romans, although he chanced to be near at hand, was obliged to remain behind against his will, owing to the scarcity of horses. [14] Ioannes then immediately sent to Sicily the members of the senate together with the seventy soldiers who had come over to him.

summer 547 [15] Totila, upon hearing this, took it very badly and eagerly sought to strike back at Ioannes for the deed. With this in view, he marched against him with most of his army, leaving a small contingent of his followers behind to keep guard. [16] Now it happened that Ioannes and his men, a thousand in number, had made camp in Lucania, having previously sent out scouts who were watching all the roads closely and keeping guard in case a hostile army approached to do them harm. [17] But Totila surmised as much, seeing as Ioannes' force would not sit in their camp without sending out scouts, and so he left the customary roads and marched against them through the mountains, many

of which in that region are steep and rise to a great height—a feat that no one would have suspected, for these mountains are considered impassable. [18] The men sent out as scouts by Ioannes did indeed observe that a hostile army had got into that region, but they found no definite information about it; however, they feared what actually did take place, and so they too marched to the Roman camp. [19] It so turned out that they arrived there at night together with the barbarians. But Totila, driven by violent rage and not weighing the consequences carefully, reaped the fruits of foolish anger. [20] For though he had under him an army ten times larger than that of his opponents, and though it was obviously better for a stronger army to fight the decisive battle in broad daylight, he should have engaged with his enemy at dawn in order that they might not be able to escape in the darkness; still, he did not take this precaution at all. In fact, he could have stretched a cordon around his opponents and immediately captured all of them as in a net, but instead he gave way to his anger and fell upon the hostile army at an advanced hour of the night. [21] Although not one of them thought of offering the least resistance, as most were in fact still sleeping, nonetheless the Goths were not able to kill many. They got up and the majority, thanks to the darkness, managed to slip away. [22] Once outside the camp they ran up into the mountains, many of which rise close by, and were saved. [23] Among them was Ioannes himself and Aruth, the leader of the Heruls. About a hundred of the Romans perished. [24] Now there had been with Ioannes a certain Gilakios, an Armenian and commander of a small force of Armenians. This Gilakios did not know how to speak either Greek or Latin or Gothic or any other language except Armenian. [25] When some Goths came upon him, they asked him who he was. They were averse to killing every man who came in their way so as not to destroy each other in fighting at night, which could easily happen. [26] But he was able to give them no answer except that he was Gilakios, a general, for his rank, which he had received from the emperor, he had heard spoken many times and had been able to learn it by heart. [27] The barbarians, then, perceiving by this that he was an enemy, made him a prisoner for the while, but not long after put him to death. [28] So Ioannes and Aruth fled with their followers as fast as they could and made for Otranto, which they reached on the run, and the Goths plundered the Roman camp and then retired.

27. Thus were the armies in Italy engaged. The emperor Justinian decided to send another army against the Goths and Totila, induced by the letters of Belisarios, who kept urging him to do that by explaining their situation. [2] Accordingly, he first sent *fall*
Pakourios, the son of Paranios, and Sergios, the nephew of Solomon, with a few men. *547*
They arrived in Italy and immediately united with the rest of the army. [3] Later on he sent Vera with three hundred Heruls, and Varazes, an Armenian by birth, with eight hundred Armenians, and he recalled from his post Valerianos, the general of Armenia, and ordered him to go to Italy with his own spearmen and guardsmen, who numbered more than a thousand. [4] Vera was the first to put in at Otranto, and he left his ships there, being unwilling to remain in that place, where Ioannes' army was, and went forward on horseback with his command. [5] This man was not serious, being utterly addicted to the disease of drunkenness, and from this he was always given to reckless daring. [6]

When they had come close to the city of Brindisi, they made camp and remained there. When Totila learned this, he said, "Vera has one of two things, either a powerful army or an empty head. [7] Let us move against him instantly, either to make trial of the man's army or show him his own silliness." [8] So Totila with these words marched against him with a numerous army. The Heruls, spying the enemy already at hand, took refuge in a wood that was close by. [9] The enemy surrounded them and killed more than two hundred, and were about to lay hands on Vera himself and the rest of the force who were hiding in the thornbushes, but chance came to their aid and saved them unexpectedly. [10] For the ships in which Varazes and the Armenians under him were sailing suddenly put in at the shore there. When Totila saw this, supposing the hostile army to be more numerous than it was, he immediately set out and marched from there, while Vera and his men were glad to reach the ships on the run. [11] Varazes decided to sail no farther, but proceeded with them to Taranto, where Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, also not long afterward came with his whole army. Such was the course of these events.

[12] The emperor wrote to Belisarios that he had sent him a numerous army with
Dec. 547 which he should unite in Calabria and so engage with the enemy. [13] In fact Valerianos had already come down close to the Adriatic Sea, but he thought that, for the present at any rate, it was inexpedient for him to ferry across. [14] For at that season of the year, he reasoned, provisions would not be sufficient for men and horses, as it was near the winter solstice. [15] He did send three hundred of his men to Ioannes with the promise that after spending the winter there he would come himself at the beginning of spring. [16] Belisarios, accordingly, upon reading the emperor's letter, selected nine hundred men noted for valor, seven hundred cavalry, and two hundred infantry, and leaving all the rest to guard that district under the command of Konon, he immediately set sail for Sicily. [17] From there he again put out to sea intending to sail to the harbor of Taranto, having on his left the place called Scilla, where the poets say that Skylla once lived, not because that monstrous woman really existed there, as they say, but because a certain fish, formerly called *skylax* and now *kyniskos* [little dog] has been found in great abundance in this part of the strait, from ancient times even down to my day. [18] For names in the beginning are always appropriate to the things they describe, but rumor, carrying these names to other peoples, creates there false opinions through ignorance of the facts. [19] As time goes on it becomes a powerful fabricator of myths, and allies with the poets, who are witnesses of things that never happened, presumably due to the license of their art. Thus, for example, the natives of the island of Kerkyra have from ancient times called one headland of their island "Dog's Head" (the one to the east), but others because of this name infer that the people there have the heads of dogs. [20] Indeed, they even call some of the Pisidians "Wolf-Skulls," not because they have the heads of wolves, but because the mountain that rises there has the name "Wolf-Helmet."[687] As for these matters, let each think and speak as he wishes. I return to the point from which I digressed.

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687. Justinian, *Novel* 24.1 (of 535) refers to the "Wolf-Skull" bandits of "Wolf-Head" mountain in Pisidia. Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.38, refers to an infantry unit of that name from "Phrygia" under Justinian.

28. So Belisarios was hastening to go straight to Taranto. Now the shore there has the form of a crescent, where the coast recedes and the sea advances in a gulf, as it were, far up into the land. [2] But the distance as one sails along this whole coast extends to one thousand stades, and on either side of the opening of the gulf stand two cities, the one toward the west being Crotone, and the one to the east Taranto. [3] At the middle of this shore is the city of Thurii. But Belisarios was hindered by a storm and forced from his course by a violent wind and a high sea that would not permit his ships to make any progress; he therefore put in at the harbor of Crotone. [4] He found neither any fortress there nor any place from which provisions could be brought in for the soldiers, so he himself together with his wife remained there with the infantry, in order that from there he might be able to summon and organize Ioannes' army; [5] but he ordered all the cavalry to go ahead and make camp at the passes leading into the country, placing in command of them Phazas the Iberian and the guardsman Barbation. [6] For in this way he thought that they could easily secure all necessary supplies for their horses and themselves, and would probably also be able to repulse the enemy in a narrow pass. [7] For the mountains of Lucania extend as far as Bruttium and, standing as they do close to one another, they form there only two passes, which are extremely narrow, one of which has received the name "Rock of Blood" in the Latin tongue, while the natives call the other Lavula. [8] Not far from these passes on the coast is Rusciane, the naval harbor of Thurii, while above it at a distance of about sixty stades is a strong fortress built by the ancient Romans. This fortress had been occupied by Ioannes much earlier and he had established a considerable garrison in it. *early 548*

[9] Now the soldiers of Belisarios, upon reaching this district, chanced upon a hostile army that Totila had sent to make an attempt on the fortress there. [10] They engaged with them immediately and by their valor routed them without difficulty, even though they were far outnumbered, and they killed more than two hundred. [11] The rest fled and, when they came before Totila, reported everything that had happened to them. As for the Romans, they made camp and remained there, but as they were without proper commanders and had won a victory, they began to conduct themselves in a careless manner. [12] They neither stayed quietly gathered in one place nor took up positions near the pass to guard the approaches, but they were negligently sleeping at night in encampments far removed from one another. During the day they would go about searching for provisions, neither sending men out as scouts nor taking any other measures for security. [13] Totila, upon learning this, selected three thousand horsemen from his army and went against the enemy. [14] Falling upon them unexpectedly, not drawn up in battle formation but going about in the manner described, he shocked and threw them into confusion. [15] At this moment Phazas, who happened to be camping nearby, encountered the enemy and performed valiant deeds. He thereby became the cause of the escape of a few men but he himself perished together with all his men. [16] This misfortune fell heavily upon the Romans, because they all pinned their hope on them as an unusually efficient fighting force. [17] Those who managed to flee saved themselves in whatever way each could. Barbation, the spearman of Belisarios, fled with

two others as hard as he could and was the first to reach Crotone. There he reported on their current fortune, and added that he thought the barbarians too would soon be at hand. [18] Belisarios, upon hearing this, took it badly, and rushed to board the ships. So they set sail from there, and as a wind was blowing, they reached Messina in Sicily that day, which is seven hundred stades from Crotone, being situated across from Reggio.

29. At about this time an army of Slavs crossed the river Danube and inflicted terrible harm throughout the whole of Illyria as far as Epidamnos, killing or enslaving all who came in their way, young and old alike, and plundering their property. [2] They had already succeeded in capturing numerous strongholds in that region, which were then undefended but previously had been reputed to be strong, and they continued to roam about searching out everything at their own pleasure. [3] The commanders of Illyria kept following them with an army of fifteen thousand men without, however, having the courage to get close to the enemy. [4] At that time also, earthquakes of extraordinary severity occurred many times during the winter season, both in Byzantion and in other places, always at night. [5] The inhabitants of these cities, supposing that they would be crushed and buried, were in great fear, yet no harm came to them from the earthquakes. [6] It was then, too, that the river Nile rose above eighteen cubits[688] and flooded all Egypt with water, yet in the Thebaid, which is upstream, the waters settled and receded at the regular time and allowed the inhabitants of that district to sow the land and attend to their other tasks just as they were used to do. [7] But as for the country below, after the water had first covered the surface, it did not recede but remained that way throughout the time of sowing, a thing that had never before happened in all of time; and there were places where the water, even after receding, flowed in again not long afterward. [8] Thus all the seeds that had been put into the ground in the interval rotted. By this strange disaster the people were reduced to dire straits, while most of the animals died through lack of food.

[9] It was then too that the whale, which the residents of Byzantion called Porphyrios, was caught.[689] This whale had harassed Byzantion and its surroundings for over fifty years, but not continuously, for sometimes it would disappear for long periods of time between appearances. [10] It sank many ships and terrified the passengers of many others, forcing them to make great detours from their course. The emperor Justinian made it a priority to capture the beast, but he could find no way by which to accomplish this. I will now explain how it recently came to be captured. [11] It happened one day that the sea was utterly still and a large number of dolphins were swimming by the mouth of the Black Sea. [12] Seeing the whale suddenly, they fled, each in whatever direction it could, but most came to the mouth of the Sangarios river. Overcoming some of them, the whale immediately gulped them down. [13] Then it continued to pursue the rest no less excitedly than before, driven on by hunger or some kind of rivalry, until it had

688. A cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters.

689. The whale is mentioned also at *Secret History* 15.37.

unintentionally come too close to the land. [14] There it ran aground in a patch of deep mud and began to struggle and convulse all over in an effort to escape from its predicament as quickly as possible. It was, however, utterly unable to get out of the shallows; rather, it sank still deeper into the mud. [15] When news of this was brought to all the people who lived in that area, they attacked it immediately. Yet even though they slashed at it vigorously on all sides with axes, they did not manage to kill it. Instead, they dragged it up with strong ropes. [16] Placing it on wagons, they found its length to be more than thirty cubits and its width ten cubits. Breaking into groups, some of them ate from it on the spot whereas others decided to cure the portion allotted to them.

[17] Now the residents of Byzantion, feeling the earthquakes and hearing about the Nile and this whale, immediately began to prophesy about the future, each according to his liking. [18] For when people do not understand the present they like to find portents regarding the future and, when they worry themselves to death about things that confuse them, they make groundless predictions about what will happen. [19] As for me, I leave these oracles and the science of portents to others. What I know well is this, that the Nile's swamping of the land became the cause of great misfortunes *in the present time*, while the demise of the whale had already proven to be a relief from many evils. [20] Some, however, say that this was not the same whale as the one I mentioned at first, but a different one that happened to be captured. But I now return to the point in my narrative from which I made this digression.

[21] Totila, after accomplishing what has been recounted and learning that the Romans in the fortress near Rusciane were beginning to run out of provisions, thought that he would capture them quickly if they were unable to bring in any supplies, and so he made camp close to the town and settled down for a siege. And the winter drew to a close and the thirteenth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[690]

30. The emperor Justinian now sent not less than two thousand infantry by sea to Sicily and ordered Valerianos to join Belisarios without any delay. [2] So he crossed the sea and put in at Otranto, where he found Belisarios together with his wife. [3] At about this time Antonina, the wife of Belisarios, set off for Byzantion, intending to beg the empress to pour more resources into the war. [4] But the empress Theodora had fallen sick and passed from the world, having lived as queen twenty-one years and three months.[691] [5] Meanwhile, the Romans besieged in the fortress near Rusciane were hard-pressed by the lack of necessities and opened negotiations with the enemy: they agreed that precisely at the middle of the summer season they would hand over the fortress, unless some relief came to them in the interval, on condition, however, that they all remain free from harm. [6] Now there were in this fortress many notables of the Italians, among whom was Deopheron, the brother of Tullianus, along with three hundred

summer 548

28 June 548

690. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 547 to spring 548.

691. I.e., since 1 April 527. For the marital arrangements that complicated Antonina's return, see *Secret History* 5.18–27.

Illyrian horsemen of the Roman army whom Ioannes had stationed there, appointing as their commanders Chalazar the spearman, a Massagete by birth and an especially able warrior, and Goudilas the Thracian; there were also a hundred infantry sent by Belisarios to guard the fortress. [7] At that time also the soldiers who had been assigned by Belisarios to garrison Rome killed their commander Konon, accusing him of trafficking in grain and other provisions to their detriment. [8] They sent some priests as envoys, firmly declaring that if the emperor did not grant them amnesty for this deed and remit to them within a specified time the back payments that the state owed them, they would without hesitation go over to Totila and the Goths. The emperor fulfilled their request.

[9] Belisarios now summoned Ioannes to Otranto and with him Valerianos and other commanders; he gathered a great fleet and sailed straight for Rusciane with all speed, intending to bring relief to the besieged. [10] Those in the fortress, seeing this fleet from their elevated position, revived their hopes and now decided not to yield to the enemy, although the day upon which they had agreed was already near. [11] But a terrific storm came on and, besides, the coast there is altogether without harbors, so the ships were scattered far apart from one another. [12] This wasted a considerable amount of time. When they regrouped in the harbor of Crotone, they put out a second time for Rusciane. But when the barbarians saw them, they leaped upon their horses and came down to the beach, intending to prevent the enemy's disembarkation. [13] Totila placed them along the greatest part of the shore face-to-face with the prows of the ships, some with spears and some with bows ready strung. [14] This array struck terror into the hearts of the Romans when they saw it and they would not dare come close, but they first stopped their ships at a great distance and remained quiet for some time, and then, giving up the landing in despair, they all backed off, put to sea, and sailed once more into the harbor of Crotone. [15] There, after taking council together, they decided that it would be better if Belisarios proceeded to Rome and set matters in order there as well as possible and bring in provisions, while Ioannes and Valerianos disembarked the men and horses on the shore and marched overland into Picenum, in order to throw into confusion the barbarians who were besieging the strongholds in that region. [16] They had the hope that Totila would be led by such moves to abandon the siege and follow them. [17] Accordingly, Ioannes and his men, a thousand in number, carried out this plan; but Valerianos, fearing the danger, went around through the Adriatic Sea with the ships and sailed straight for Ancona. For he thought that he could in this way reach Picenum with safety and unite with Ioannes. [18] But even so Totila was unwilling to abandon the siege; while he himself remained settled there, he selected two thousand horsemen from the army and sent them into Picenum, to join the barbarians there and repulse the forces of Ioannes and Valerianos.

[19] The Romans who were besieged in the fortress at Rusciane, seeing that their provisions had now completely failed them and that they had no further hope of assistance from the other Romans, sent Goudilas the guardsman and Deopheron the Italian to Totila and opened negotiations concerning their safety, begging him to pardon them for their deeds. [20] Totila promised that he would inflict punishment upon no one except Chalazar, seeing that he had disregarded the previous agreement, but he would waive

the charge against all the others. Thus he took over the fortress. [21] He cut off both the hands of Chalazar and his private parts and then killed him immediately; as for the soldiers, he ordered those who wished to do so to remain, keeping their possessions, on condition that they array themselves thereafter with the Goths on terms of complete equality. Indeed, it was his custom to do this when other strongholds were captured too. [22] But those who were not satisfied to remain he commanded to depart, albeit unarmed, and go wherever they pleased, so that no man at all was marching under his standard unwillingly. [23] So, while eighty of the Roman army left their possessions and came to Crotone, the rest remained where they were with their possessions. [24] The Italians, however, he deprived of all their property, although he left their persons entirely unharmed. [25] When Antonina, the wife of Belisarios, reached Byzantion after the death of the empress, she begged the emperor to summon her husband back. This she accomplished readily. For the Persian war was now pressing the emperor Justinian to the utmost, and led him to this decision.

31. At this time some men plotted to attack the emperor Justinian. I will now explain how they came to this decision and how their plot was foiled and came to nothing. [2] Artabanes, the man who brought down the rebel Gontharis, as I related in an earlier book,[692] conceived a strong desire to marry Preïekta, the emperor's niece, to whom he was engaged. [3] She too was very willing to do this, not that she was driven to it by any erotic passion for the man but she did recognize a debt of gratitude to him for avenging the murder of her husband, Areobindos, and coming to her rescue and saving her when she was a prisoner and about to be forced against her will to share the bed of the rebel Gontharis.[693] [4] As they both liked the idea, Artabanes sent Preïekta to the emperor while he continued to invent various specious pretexts to induce the emperor to recall him to Byzantion, even though he was appointed general of all of North Africa. [5] He was led to this by the hopes stirred in him by this marriage, both the many advantages that would issue from it and the fact that he would then not be far from the throne. [6] For human beings, when they come into good fortune accidentally, are not able to leave it at that in their minds but eagerly look forward to the next thing, and are always moving forward in their expectations until, finally, they are deprived even of the happiness that has undeservedly come to them.

late 548–early 549

At any rate, the emperor granted the request, [7] and recalled Artabanes to Byzantion, replacing him with another general for North Africa, as I narrated above.[694] [8] When Artabanes reached Byzantion, the populace admired him for his noble deeds and generally loved him. [9] For he was tall and handsome, liberal in his character, and spoke little. The emperor, moreover, granted him the highest honors. [10] He appointed him general

692. 4.28.

693. 4.27.22.

694. 4.28.44–45.

of the soldiers in Byzantion and commander of the *foederati*,[695] promoting him also to the honor of the consuls. [11] As for Preïekta, however, he was unable to marry her, for it turned out that he already had a wife, a relation of his who had married him in childhood. [12] Long before this, however, he had separated from her, probably for one of those reasons that set husbands and wives at loggerheads. [13] This woman, so long as Artabanes' station was humble, had stayed at home and not meddled in his affairs, enduring her circumstances in silence. But now that his deeds were glorious and his fortunes magnificent, she could no longer bear her disgrace and came to Byzantion. Falling upon the mercy of the empress, she asked that her husband be restored to her. [14] The empress then—for it was her nature to side with women in distress[696]—decided that Artabanes had to live with her whether he liked it or not, and that Preïekta would become the wife of Ioannes, the son of Pompeïos, the son of Hypatios.[697] [15] Artabanes did not endure this misfortune calmly but grew angry and said that one who had done so many noble deeds for the Romans . . .[698] no one allowed him to marry the woman to whom he was engaged, when both of them were entering that union willingly, and that he was instead being forced to spend the rest of his life with the one person who was more repulsive to him than anyone else. For this is indeed the kind of thing that can

28 June 548 exasperate one's soul. [16] So when the empress died not long after that, he gladly and immediately sent this woman away, in fact as swiftly as possible. [17] Now it happened that the emperor's nephew Germanos had a brother named Boraïdes. This Boraïdes, then, the brother of Germanos, had recently died, leaving most of his property to his brother and his brother's children. [18] Even though he had a wife and daughter, he instructed that his daughter inherit only so much as the law required. Because of this, the emperor insisted on siding with the daughter, which greatly annoyed Germanos.[699]

32. This, then, was how matters stood between the emperor on the one hand and Artabanes and Germanos on the other. Now there happened to be a certain Arsakes in Byzantion, an Armenian by origin, one of the Arsakids, who was related to Artabanes. [2] This man had been caught not long before in an attempt to harm state interests and had, beyond any doubt, been convicted of treason as he had been working for Chosroes, the king of the Persians, against the Romans. [3] But the emperor did him no harm other than to have him lashed on his back a few times and paraded in disgrace through the city on a camel. He removed nothing from his body or even his property; he did not even send him into exile. [4] Yet Arsakes was furious at what had happened and began

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695. I.e., *magister militum praesentalis* and *comes foederatorum*.

696. A negative interpretation of this quality is given at *Secret History* 17.24–26.

697. Preïekta married Ioannes between 546 (her return from North Africa) and 548 (the death of Theodora). Hypatios, his grandfather, was the ill-fated nephew of the emperor Anastasios.

698. There is a problem in the text here.

699. Justinian had sought to limit testators' rights to dispose of their property however they wished in their wills and stipulated minimum shares to which different kinds of heirs were entitled; see *Novel* 18 (of 536).

to plot treason against Justinian and the state. [5] When he saw that Artabanes was also disgruntled, being his relative, he provoked him even further, ambushing the man with abuse during their conversations. Without letting up day or night, he insulted him by saying that he had picked the wrong times to be manly at first and then some sort of androgynous thing. [6] When facing the hardships of *others* he had risen bravely to the occasion and undone the usurpation: even though Gontharis was his ally and his host, he had seized him with own hands and slain him without any provocation whatever. [7] But present circumstances had unmanned him, so here he sat like a coward while his own country was under a harsh occupation and being bled by unheard-of taxes; his father had been killed for the sake of the terms of some treaty;[700] and his entire family had been enslaved and scattered to every corner of the Roman empire.[701] [8] And yet, with all these things being so, Artabanes was satisfied with himself just to be appointed general of the Romans and bear but the *name* of consul.[702]

Arsakes to Artabanes

> "Moreover," he said, "you hardly commiserate with me even though I am your kinsman and have been horribly treated, while I, friend, sympathize with what you suffered over these two women, how you lost the one unjustly and were forced to live with the other. [9] Yet it is hardly likely that anyone who had even a trace of spirit left in him would shrink back from murdering Justinian, nor need there be any hesitation or dread about it—for that man is always sitting unguarded in some lobby at untimely hours of the night explicating the Christian scriptures in the company of some superannuated priests."[703] [10] "Nor," he added, "will any of Justinian's relatives oppose you. The one who is indeed the most powerful of them all, Germanos, will, I believe, be most eager to join you with his own sons, who are young men boiling with rage against him on account of their age and spirit. In fact, I am hopeful that they will even do the deed on their own initiative. [11] For they have been treated unjustly by him, more so than have we or any other Armenian."

With such words Arsakes was constantly working a spell upon Artabanes, and, when he saw that the man was warming to the idea, he brought the matter before another Persarmenian, Chanaranges by name.[704] [12] This Chanaranges was a young man, but well built; but he was not altogether serious, inclining rather to a childish personality.

700. Artabanes' father, Ioannes, was murdered by the Roman general Bouzes in 539 while negotiating on behalf of the Armenian rebels; see 2.3.28–31. The plot against Justinian recounted here borrows language from the fall of the Spartan Pausanias in Thucydides, *History* 1.131–33.

701. Presumably referring to the Arsakids.

702. Artbanes had been awarded the honorary title of consul (in 546), not the office itself, which had lapsed in 541; see 7.31.9 above.

703. Justinian was notorious for working and studying theology at night (see *Secret History* 12.20, 13.28–30, 15.11, and 18.29), and the emperor himself drew attention to his nocturnal labors in the preface to *Novel* 8. He was known in Constantinople as "the emperor who doesn't sleep."

704. His name was derived from the Persian office *kanarang*; in Greek both are spelled *chanaranges*.

[13] When Arsakes had ensured that he and Artabanes shared intentions and had expressed their agreement to each other, he took his leave of them, stating that he was going to secure the assent of Germanos and his sons to their enterprise. [14] Now the eldest of Germanos' sons, Ioustinos, was a young man who still had his first beard, but was energetic and quick to action. [15] Hence a short time earlier he had even mounted the curule seat of the consuls.[705] Accosting him, Arsakes said that he wished to meet with him secretly in a sanctuary. [16] When the two met in the church, Arsakes first demanded that Ioustinos declare on oath that he would not reveal what was about to be said to any person in the world except his father. [17] When he had sworn to that effect, he began to upbraid him for being a very close relative to the emperor and yet watching as these common and vulgar people held the offices of the state to which they had no right. He was already of an age to manage his own affairs but had to suffer the fact that not only he but his father too, who had reached the peak of virtue, as well as his brother Ioustinianos were forever limited to a private station. [18] He had not even been allowed to inherit the property of his uncle despite the fact that he was the rightful heir, at least according to Boraïdes' intentions; almost all of it had unjustly been taken away from him. [19] And it was, in fact, likely that they would be all the more snubbed in the near future, given that Belisarios was swiftly returning from Italy. For he was reported to be halfway through Illyria by then.[706] [20] With this as his premise, Arsakes incited the young man to join in the plot against the emperor and revealed to him what had been agreed among himself, Artabanes, and Chanaranges concerning this action. [21] Ioustinos was shocked when he heard all this and grew dizzy at the prospect of it but told Arsakes that neither he nor Germanos, his father, could ever do these things.

[22] Arsakes now told Artabanes what had happened, while Ioustinos reported the entire matter to his father. The latter then confided in Markellos, who was the commander of the palace guards,[707] and they deliberated whether it was advisable for them to bring the issue to the emperor's attention. [23] Now this Markellos was a most serious man who kept his silence in most matters, did nothing for the sake of money, and did not tolerate jokes or frivolous behavior. He took no pleasure in relaxation but lived an austere life, always maintaining a personal lifestyle in which pleasure played no role. He handled everything with a carefully honed sense of justice and burned with a passion to know the truth. [24] At that juncture, he would not allow any report of this to reach the emperor.

Markellos to Ioustinos

"It is inadvisable," he said, "for *you* to become an informant in this matter. For if you should wish to speak to the emperor secretly, those around Artabanes will immediately suspect that you have reported on this very thing, and if Arsakes somehow manages to get away, the accusation will remain unproven. [25] For

705. Flavius Mar. Petrus Theodorus Valentinus Rusticius Boraides Germanus Iustinus was consul in 540. He was later murdered by the emperor Justin II.

706. Belisarios left Italy in early 549 and must have arrived in Constantinople by April.

707. Markellos was *comes* of the *excubitores*, the only battle-worthy unit of palatine guards.

> my part, I am not in the habit of believing anything myself or reporting it to the emperor that I have not first examined thoroughly. [26] I would prefer either to hear these words with my own ears or for one of my close associates to hear the man saying something unambiguous about the matter, if you can arrange it."

[27] When he heard this, Germanos instructed his son Ioustinos to bring about what Markellos had requested. [28] But he had nothing more to say to Arsakes about the matter given that he had, as I stated, flatly refused to participate. [29] So he asked Chanaranges whether Arsakes had recently come to him on behalf of Artabanes. "For I," he said, "would never dare to entrust any of my secrets to him, seeing what kind of person he is. [30] But if you yourself were willing to tell me something helpful, perhaps we could deliberate together and even perform some noble deed." [31] Conferring with Artabanes about this, Chanaranges explained to Ioustinos all that Arsakes had told him earlier.

[32] When Ioustinos agreed to carry everything into execution himself and to secure his father's assent, it was decided that Chanaranges would discuss the matter personally with Germanos, and a day was appointed for the meeting. [33] Germanos reported this to Markellos and requested that he detail one of his close associates to witness what Chanaranges would say. [34] Markellos chose Leontios for the task, the son-in-law of Athanasios, who professed a strict regard for justice and always spoke the truth. [35] Germanos brought this man into his house and placed him in a room across which a heavy curtain was hung as a screen for the couch on which he was accustomed to dine. [36] He hid Leontios inside this curtain while he and his son Ioustinos remained outside. [37] When Chanaranges arrived, Leontios clearly heard him divulge all that he, Artabanes, and Arsakes were plotting. [38] Among it all this too was said, that if they killed the emperor while Belisarios was still on his way to Byzantion, none of their plans would advance; even if it was their intention to place Germanos on the throne, Belisarios would muster a large army in the towns of Thrace and, once he moved against them, they would not by any means be able to turn him back. [39] It would therefore be necessary to postpone the deed until Belisarios was present, but as soon as the man arrived at Byzantion and went to the emperor in the palace, then, sometime late in the evening, they could go there with daggers but without warning and kill Markellos and Belisarios along with the emperor. [40] It would then be much easier for them to arrange matters to their liking.

Markellos learned all this from Leontios but decided not to bring it to the emperor's attention because he was still apprehensive that, out of excessive zeal, he might bring about the condemnation of Artabanes on insufficient grounds. [41] But Germanos did reveal everything to Bouzes and Konstantianos, fearing, which is indeed what happened, that some suspicion might fall upon him because of the delay. [42] Many days later, when it was announced that Belisarios would soon arrive, Markellos reported the entire matter to the emperor, who immediately ordered that those with Artabanes should be taken to prison, and he appointed some officers to torture them for information. [43] When the whole conspiracy came to light and everything had been explicitly written

down, the emperor convened all the members of the senate to the palace, where they meet in order to resolve cases in which there is doubt. [44] When they read everything that those under investigation had recounted, they went so far as to involve Germanos and his son Ioustinos in the indictment, until Germanos brought forth the testimony of Markellos and Leontios, at which point the suspicion was lifted. [45] For they, along with Konstantianos and Bouzes, declared under oath that Germanos had concealed nothing whatever from them regarding this matter but that everything had happened exactly in the way in which I have just described it. [46] So the senators immediately and unanimously cleared both him and his son, finding that they had committed no offense against the state.

[47] But when they all went inside to the emperor's court, the emperor himself, who had become furious, was openly displeased and spoke with great anger against Germanos, blaming him for the delay in the disclosure. Two of his officials, seeking to ingratiate themselves with him, agreed with his opinion and made as if they too were distressed. In doing so they incited the emperor to become even angrier, for their purpose was to indulge him when it concerned the misfortunes of others. [48] The rest cowered in fear and yielded to him by not resisting his will. Markellos alone managed to save the man by speaking candidly. [49] He took the responsibility upon himself and stated, as emphatically as was in his power, that Germanos had revealed to him what was going on at the earliest opportunity but that he himself had reported the matter in a more deliberate fashion in order to conduct an exacting investigation. [50] In this way he placated the emperor's anger. For this Markellos earned great fame among all men as one who gave proof of his virtue at a most dangerous moment. [51] The emperor Justinian dismissed Artabanes from his office but harmed him in no other way, nor did he harm any of the others beyond keeping them under guard, although with no dishonor attached, indeed in the palace and not in a public prison.

33. At this point in the war, the barbarians became unquestionably masters of the whole West. Though the Romans had been at first decisively victorious in the Gothic War, as I have previously recounted, the result for them was that they had not only spent money and lives in huge amounts and to no advantage, but they had also lost Italy besides, and had to look on while practically all of Illyria and Thrace were being ravaged and destroyed in confusion by the barbarians, who were now their neighbors. This came about as follows. [2] The Goths had at the beginning of this war given to the Germans all of Gaul that was subject to them, believing that they would never be able to array themselves against both nations, as I explained in a previous book.[708] [3] This act the Romans were not only unable to prevent, but the emperor Justinian even encouraged it, so as not to encounter any obstacle from having these particular barbarians roused to war [4] (for the Franks would not consider that their possession of Gaul was secure unless the emperor had put his seal of his approval upon their title). Consequently, the

708. 5.13.24.

rulers of the Germans occupied Massalia, the colony of Phokaia, all the coastal towns, and gained control of that part of the sea. [5] So they view the horse races at Arles and strike a gold coin from the mines in Gaul, stamping not the likeness of the emperor of the Romans on this *stater*, as is customary, but their own. [6] Yet while the king of the Persians is accustomed to make silver coinage as he likes, it is not considered right for him or any other king in the whole barbarian world to stamp his own likeness on a gold *stater*, even if he owns much gold; for they are unable to tender such a coin to those with whom they do business, even if the parties in the transaction are barbarians.[709] Thus, then, did matters stand with the Franks.

[7] When the Goths and Totila had gained the upper hand in the war, the Franks took control of the largest part of Venetia with no right at all, for the Romans were unable to ward them off any longer just as the Goths were unable to carry on the war against both peoples. [8] Meanwhile, the Gepids held the city of Sirmium and almost all the cities of Dacia, having taken possession of them as soon as the emperor Justinian removed them from the Goths; and they not only enslaved the Romans of that region, but they were also constantly moving forward, plundering and doing violence to the Roman territory.[710] [9] Consequently the emperor was no longer giving them the payments which it had long been customary for them to receive from the Romans. [10] The emperor Justinian ceded to the Lombards a city of Noricum and the strongholds of Pannonia, as well as many other towns and a great amount of money.[711] [11] Because of this the Lombards departed from their ancestral homes and settled on this side of the river Danube, not far from the Gepids. [12] They, then, in turn, plundered the people of Dalmatia and Illyria as far as the boundaries of Epidamnos, taking them captive. Some of the captives escaped and managed to get back to their homes, but these barbarians would take hold of them if they recognized them within the Roman domain and, on the grounds that they were at peace with the Romans, treated them as their own slaves who had run away, dragging them away from their parents and carrying them off to their own homes, with no one opposing them. [13] Other towns of Dacia also, around the city of Singidunum, had been taken over by the Heruls as a gift from the emperor, and here they are settled still, overrunning and plundering Illyria and the

709. Theudebert I (r. 534–548) began to mint gold coins with his own image. Sasanian gold coins were rare and probably used ceremonially; Prokopios' testimony here might constitute proof that they were not accepted for business transactions. Kosmas Indikopleustes, *Christian Topography* 2.77, claims that the Roman coin was accepted in every part of the world. He later tells a story about the king of Taprobane (Sri Lanka) who pronounced the Roman emperor superior to the Persian king by comparing the former's gold coin to the latter's silver coin (ibid., 11.17–19).

710. The Goths had repelled a Gepid attack on Sirmium ca. 530 (see 5.3.15, 5.11.5); the Romans had taken it from the Goths in 535; and the Gepids occupied it the following year. In 539, the Gepids defeated and killed the general Calluc (Continuer of Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 538/539).

711. This was probably between 545 and 547.

Thracian towns. Some of them have even become Roman soldiers, enlisted among the *foederati*, as they are called. [14] So whenever envoys of the Heruls are sent to Byzantion, representing the very men who are plundering Roman subjects, they collect all their contributions from the emperor and convey them home without any obstacle.

34. Thus the barbarians apportioned the Roman empire among themselves. But later the Gepids and the Lombards, who were now neighbors, became extremely hostile to each other. [2] They were fully eager in their desire to fight each other, so that each side was chaffing to fight against the enemy and a fixed time had been set for the battle. [3] But the Lombards, thinking that they alone by their own strength would not be a match for the Gepids in battle (they were, in fact, outnumbered by their enemy), decided to invite the Romans to an alliance. [4] So they sent envoys to the emperor
548/ 549 Justinian and begged him to send them an army. When the Gepids learned this, they too sent envoys to Byzantion to make the same request. The Gepids were ruled at that time by Thorisin, and the other side by Audoin. [5] So the emperor Justinian decided to hear the statement of each, albeit he did not wish them to come at the same time but to appear before him separately.[712] [6] First the Lombards came into the emperor's presence and spoke as follows:

Lombards to Justinian

For our part, O emperor, we are astonished at the outrageous conduct of the Gepids, who have already perpetrated many and great crimes against your realm and now come before you to offer you, in fact, the greatest possible insult. [7] For they alone inflict the ultimate insults upon you their neighbors, and then imagine that the latter are so easily deceived that they come to them with the intention of profiting by the simplicity of those very men whom they have wronged. [8] We ask you to give careful consideration to this matter, namely what attitude the Gepids assume toward their friends. In doing so you will ensure the welfare of the Roman empire with the greatest certainty, for men are always able to infer safely from previous events what the future will bring. [9] If, now, the nation of the Gepids had displayed their ingratitude only to some other people, it would have been necessary for us to take up much time with long arguments and to bring in testimony from outside, in striving to demonstrate the character of these men; but as it is, there is an example near at hand that we can use from your own experience. [10] Consider that the Goths formerly held the land of Dacia as a tributary province, while all the Gepids lived originally on the other side of the Danube, being in such mortal terror of Gothic power that they never succeeded in even attempting to cross the stream. At the same time, they were friends and allies of the Romans and every year received from the former emperors many gifts in the name of this friendship, no less in fact from you yourself. [11] We would be happy to ask these men what good they have done for the Romans in return for these benefits. But they would not be able to mention one such thing,

712. The following speeches are modeled on those of the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians at Athens in Thucydides, *History* 1.31–45.

great or small. [12] Now as long as they had no means of doing you wrong, they remained quiet, not because of conviction on their part but because they were forced by lack of opportunity. [13] For you did not seek to lay any claim to the territory beyond the Danube, while their fear of the Goths always kept them away from this side. [14] But who would call impotence gratitude? And what assurance of friendship could be based on the inability to commit an offense? None, O emperor; these things cannot be. For opportunity alone reveals the nature of a man, bringing out his character before the public gaze of all because of his freedom to act. [15] For look, at the very moment when the Gepids saw that the Goths had been driven from all of Dacia, while you were busy fighting your enemies, these vile wretches have dared to trespass upon your land in every part. [16] How could anyone adequately depict in words the outrageous nature of their action? Did they not show contempt for the Roman empire? Did they not break the bonds of both treaty and alliance? [17] Did they not insult those whom they should never have treated thus? Did they not do violence to an empire whose slaves they would crave the privilege of being if you but turned your attention to them? The Gepids, O emperor, are holding Sirmium and enslaving Romans, and they boast that they are in possession of all Dacia. [18] Yet what war have they ever won fighting on your behalf, or with you, or against you? Or what battle do they think has brought them this land as a prize? And this they do often while in your pay, and they have been receiving these payments, as previously stated, for we know not how long a time. [19] Yet there has never in all time been an act more despicable than this present embassy of theirs. For as soon as they saw that we were eager to make war on them, they had the gall to come to Byzantion and appear before an emperor who has been so insulted by them. [20] In their excess of shamelessness, they will perhaps invite you to form an alliance against us who have been so favored by you. [21] Or, if they have come to give back what they usurped without right, the Lombards should be considered by the Romans as most responsible for that benefit, if they are really constrained through fear of us unwillingly to change their policy and show gratitude so late in the day. [22] For naturally he who creates the constraint will be thanked by him who receives the benefit. But if even now they have decided to give up none of their usurped holdings, what could surpass such malice? [23] Let us, then, put the matter thus, with barbarian simplicity, scant words, and in no way worthily of the situation.[713] [24] Emperor, after carefully weighing what we have said less adequately than the facts deserve, choose a policy that will redound to the benefit both of the Romans and the Lombards, your people, considering this in addition to all the rest, that while the Romans will justly take sides with us, who have agreed with you about God from the start, they will oppose them for the simple reason that they are Arians.

[25] Thus spoke the Lombards. On the following day the envoys of the Gepids came in turn before the emperor and spoke as follows:

713. This speech is, ironically, one of the most rhetorically complex in the *Wars*.

Gepids to Justinian

It is just, O emperor, that those who come to a neighboring state with a request for an alliance should first demonstrate that they have come with a just request that is in the interest of those who are to form the alliance, and thus to speak on the matters for which they have come to treat. [26] That we have been wronged by the Lombards is evident from the facts themselves; for we are eager to settle our difficulties by arbitration, [27] and those who are bent on arbitration can have nothing to do with violence. [28] Nor is there any reason to use long speeches in order to prove that the Gepids are far superior to the Lombards both in multitude and in valor, especially when our audience already knows this. [29] Now we do not think that anyone who has even a small little prudence would choose to enter a conflict on the side of the weaker party and thus get into an evil situation that can be foreseen, especially when the opportunity is offered to gain victory without danger by arraying oneself with the more powerful side. [30] And you will also find, when you go forth against another enemy, that the Gepids hereafter will array themselves with you, paying a debt of gratitude for what you have done and, by their overwhelming power, helping you in all likelihood to prevail over your foes. [31] Furthermore, you should consider this also, that while the Lombards have become friends of the Romans on the spur of the moment, the Gepids have always been in alliance with you and are well known to you. [32] Friendship cemented by long duration is not easily dissolved. So you will acquire not only powerful, but also steadfast, allies. [33] These, then, are the just claims on which we invite you to form this alliance. But observe what manner of men the Lombards are. [34] At first, overcome by their unreasoning boldness, they absolutely refused to settle our differences by arbitration, even though we invited them repeatedly to do so. Now that the war has come almost to an actual engagement, they are reversing their position because they realize fully their own weakness and come to you, asking the Romans to take up an unjust fight on their behalf. [35] Doubtless these thieves bring up the case of Sirmium and a few other towns in Dacia as a basis for you to enter this war. [36] Yet your empire comprises such an overabundance of cities and lands that you are even searching for men upon whom to confer some part of it for their habitation. [37] You have given the Franks and the nation of the Heruls and these Lombards such generous gifts of both cities and lands, O emperor, that no one could enumerate them all. [38] But we, emboldened by your friendship, have accomplished what you wanted. When a man has decided to part with one of his possessions, he thinks less of the one who waits to receive his gift than the one who anticipates his purpose and takes the gift by his own decision, so long as does not appear to have claimed the right to take this course in a spirit of insolence toward the owner but in confidence in the strong friendship he feels toward him; and this is exactly the attitude of the Gepids toward the Romans. [39] We ask you, then, to remember this and, preferably, to observe the terms of our alliance by coming with all your strength against the Lombards with us, or else to stand aside for both. For in reaching such a decision you are acting with justice and greatly to the advantage of the Roman empire.

[40] Such was the speech of the Gepids. The emperor Justinian, after long deliberation, decided to send their envoys away empty-handed, and he made a sworn alliance of arms with the Lombards, and sent them more than ten thousand horsemen commanded by Konstantianos, Bouzes, and Aratios. [41] Sent with them also was Ioannes, *spring 549* the nephew of Vitalianos, who had received previous instructions from the emperor that, as soon as they fought a decisive battle with the nation of the Gepids, he was to hasten to Italy with his men. For he, too, as it happened, had returned from Italy. [42] They took with them as allies fifteen hundred Heruls, commanded by Filimuth and others. [43] All the other Heruls, to the number of three thousand, were arrayed with the Gepids, given that they had revolted from the Romans not long before for the cause I explained above.[714] [44] Now a detachment of the Romans who were marching to join the Lombards as allies unexpectedly chanced upon some the Heruls with Aordus, the brother of their ruler. [45] A fierce battle ensued which the Romans won, and they slew both Aordus and many of the Heruls. When the Gepids learned that the Roman army was close at hand, they immediately settled their differences with the Lombards, and so these barbarians made a peace treaty, contrary to the will of the Romans. [46] When the Roman army learned this, they found themselves in a perplexing situation. For neither were they able to continue their advance nor could they retrace their steps, because the generals feared that both Gepids and Heruls might overrun and plunder Illyria. [47] So they remained there and reported their situation to the emperor. Such was the course of these events. But I return to the point in my narrative from which I digressed.

35. Belisarios returned to Byzantion in disarray. For five years he had not disembarked anywhere on the soil of Italy nor had he succeeded in making a single march there by land, but he had taken refuge in concealed flight during this whole time, always sailing without interruption from one coastal fort to another stronghold along the shore.[715] [2] As a result the enemy, having now little to fear, had enslaved Rome and everything else, practically speaking. It was then that Belisarios abandoned Perugia, the leading city of Tuscany, although it was very closely besieged; indeed, it was taken by storm while he was on his way. [3] After reaching Byzantion, he took up permanent residence there, now that he was very rich and greatly admired for his earlier successes, just as some higher power had foretold to him by a conspicuous sign before the expedition to Libya. [4] The sign was as follows. Belisarios had an inherited property in the suburb of Byzantion called Panteichion, which lies on the opposite mainland. On this property, shortly before the time when Belisarios was about to lead the Roman army against Gelimer and Libya, it so happened that his vines bore a great abundance of grapes. [5] With the wine they produced his servants had filled a great quantity of jars, which they placed in the wine cellar, burying the lower part of them in the earth and smearing the upper part carefully with clay. [6] But eight months later the wine in some jars, as it

714. 6.15.36.

715. A similar evaluation can be found at *Secret History* 5.1.

began to ferment, burst the clay with which each had been sealed; then it overflowed and, pouring out copiously, covered the ground around with such a flood that it actually formed a great pool on the floor there. [7] When the servants saw this, they were filled with amazement; and they were able to fill many amphorae from it, after which they again stopped up these jars with clay and remained silent about the matter. [8] But when they had seen this happen many times at about the same date, they did report the matter to their master; he gathered many of his friends there and displayed the phenomenon, whereupon they foretold that many blessings would fall upon that house, basing their conclusion upon this sign.

[9] So much, then, for Belisarios. Vigilius, the chief priest of Rome, together with the Italians who were in the City at that time (and there were many very notable men there), was entreating the emperor to devote himself to Italy with all his strength, and he would not let up. [10] But Justinian was influenced most of all by Cethegus,[716] a man of patrician rank who had long before risen to the dignity of the consular office; for he, too, had recently come to Byzantion for this very purpose.[717] [11] Now the emperor did promise to take care of the matter, still he was devoting his time for the most part to the doctrines of the Christians, seeking eagerly and with great determination to make a satisfactory settlement of the questions disputed among them. [12] That was what was happening in Byzantion. Meanwhile, one of the Lombards had fled to the Gepids for the following reason. [13] When Wacca ruled the Lombards, he had a nephew named Riciulf who, according to the law, would be called to power when Wacca died. [14] So Wacca, to ensure that the kingdom would be conferred upon his own son, brought an unjustified accusation against Riciulf and sentenced the man to exile.[718] [15] So he then departed from his home with a few friends and fled immediately to the Varni, leaving behind him two children. [16] But Wacca bribed these barbarians to kill Riciulf. As for Riciulf's children, one of them died of disease, while the other, Hildiges by name, fled to the Slavs.[719] [17] Not long after Wacca fell sick and passed from the world, and the rule of the Lombards fell to Waltari, the son of Wacca. But he was very young, so Audoin was appointed regent and administered the government.[720] [18] He possessed great power as a result of this and soon seized the throne, and the child immediately died by an illness. [19] When the war arose between the Gepids and the Lombards,

716. The text has "Gothigus," but it should certainly be corrected.

717. The ex-consuls Cethegus, Albinus, and Basilius are said to have presented themselves desolate before Justinian in the (generally unreliable) biography of Vigilius in *The Book of Pontiffs* 61.

718. Exact dates cannot be given for the reign of Wacca (Vaces), who was still alive in 539. His son was Waltari, who reigned as a child-king for seven years after Wacca's death, but he had been succeeded by the regent Audoin by 548.

719. Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* 1.21, explains that Hildiges attacked Wacca because Wacca had killed Tato, Hildiges' father, the previous king. Hildiges lost and fled to the Gepids, where he remained thereafter (for Tato see *Wars* 6.14.12).

720. This was probably between 540 and 547.

as already told,[721] Hildiges went straight to the Gepids, bringing with him both his Lombard followers and many Slavs, and the Gepids hoped to restore him to the throne. [20] But because of the treaty that now existed with the Lombards, Audoin immediately requested that the Gepids, being now his friends, surrender Hildiges, but they refused to give up the man, although they did order him to depart from their country and save himself wherever he wished. [21] He, then, without delay, took his followers and some Gepid volunteers and came back to the Slavs. [22] Departing from there, he went to join Totila and the Goths, having with him an army of not less than six thousand men. Upon his arrival in Venetia, he encountered some Romans under Lazaros and, engaging with them, he routed the force and killed many. He did not, however, unite with the Goths, but recrossed the Danube river and withdrew once more to the Slavs. *summer 549*

[23] While these events were taking place in the manner described, one of the spearmen of Belisarios, Indulf by name and of barbarian birth, a passionate and energetic man who had been left in Italy, went over to Totila and the Goths for no good reason. [24] Totila immediately sent him with a large army and a fleet to Dalmatia. [25] So he came to the place called Muccurum, which is a coastal town situated very near Salona. At first, being a Roman and a man of Belisarios, he mingled with the people of the town, but then he drew his sword, urged his followers to do the same, and suddenly killed them all. [26] Taking all the valuables as plunder, he departed from there and descended upon another fortress situated on the coast, which the Romans call Laurento. [27] He entered the place and slew those who fell in his way. When Klaudianos, who then commanded Salona, learned this, he sent an army against him on dromons, as they are called. When this force reached Laurento, they engaged with the enemy. But they were overwhelmingly defeated in the battle and fled, wherever each man could, leaving their ships in the harbor. And it so happened that the other boats were there laden with grain and other provisions. All these Indulf and the Goths captured and, after killing all whom they met and making plunder of the valuables, they returned to Totila. And the winter drew to a close and the fourteenth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[722]

36. Totila now led his whole army against Rome and, establishing himself there, entered upon a siege. But it happened that Belisarios had selected three thousand men noted for their valor and appointed them to garrison Rome, placing Diogenes in command, one of his own spearmen, a man of unusual prudence and an able warrior. [2] Consequently a long time was consumed in the blockade. The besieged showed themselves, thanks to their extraordinary valor, a match for the entire Gothic army, while Diogenes was ever keeping a strict watch so that no one could approach the wall to damage it; also, he sowed grain in all parts of the city inside the circuit-wall and so ensured that they had no shortage of food. [3] The barbarians attempted to storm the fortifications many times

721. 7.34.1.

722. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 548 to spring 549.

and made trial of the circuit-wall, but they were always repulsed, driven back from the wall by the valor of the Romans. But they did take Portus and held Rome under close siege. Such was the course of these events. [4] When the emperor saw that Belisarios had returned to Byzantion, he began to make plans for sending another commander with an army against the Goths and Totila. [5] If he had actually carried out this idea, I believe that, with Rome still under his power and the soldiers in the city saved for him and enabled to unite with the relieving force from Byzantion, he would have overcome his opponents in the war. [6] But as it was, after first selecting Liberius, a patrician from Rome, and ordering him to make himself ready, he later, perhaps because some other business claimed his attention, lost interest in the matter.

[7] The siege of Rome had dragged on, when some of the Isaurians who were guarding the gate that bears the name of the Apostle Paul[723]—men nursing a grievance because for many years they had been paid nothing by the emperor, and observing, at the same time, that those Isaurians who had previously surrendered Rome to the Goths now boasted vast sums of money—secretly opened negotiations with Totila and agreed to hand over the city, and a definite day was appointed for the transaction. [8] When

16 Jan. 550 the appointed day had come, Totila contrived the following plan. During the first watch of the night he launched two long boats in the Tiber river, placing on them men who knew how to use a trumpet. [9] He commanded them to row straight across the Tiber and, when they came close to the circuit-wall, to sound the trumpets there with all their might. [10] Meanwhile, he himself was holding the Gothic army in readiness close to the aforementioned gate which bears the name of the Apostle Paul, unobserved by the enemy. [11] Reasoning that, if any of the Roman army succeeded in escaping from the city, as they well might under cover of darkness, they would go to Centumcellae,[724] for no other fortress was left to them among the towns of that region, he decided to guard the road leading there by placing ambushes of warlike men, whom he ordered to kill the fugitives. [12] So the men in the boats, upon getting near the city, immediately blew their trumpets, as they had been instructed. [13] The Romans were thunderstruck and, falling into great fear and confusion, suddenly abandoned their posts for no good reason and ran to help at that point, supposing that the attempt was directed against the wall there. [14] Thus the Isaurians who were betraying the city remained alone at their post, and they opened the gates at their leisure and received the enemy into the city. [15] And there was great slaughter of those who fell into the hands of the enemy there, although many fled through other gates; those, however, who went toward Centumcellae fell into the ambushes and perished. However, a few of them did barely escape, Diogenes too, they say, being among them, safe albeit wounded.

[16] Now there was in the Roman army one Paulos, a Kilikian by birth, who at first had been in charge of the household of Belisarios but later went with the army to Italy in command of a cavalry unit and had been appointed with Diogenes to command

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723. I.e., the Porta Ostiensis.

724. Modern Civitavecchia.

the garrison of Rome. [17] This Paulos, while the city was being captured, rushed with four hundred horsemen into the tomb of Hadrian and seized the bridge leading to the church of the Apostle Peter. [18] While it was still dawn and a little daylight was about to appear, the Gothic army closed with these men, but they withstood their enemy most vigorously there and gained the upper hand; indeed, they slew large numbers of the barbarians, as they were in a great throng and huddled together. [19] When Totila saw this, he stopped the fighting immediately and ordered the Goths calmly to blockade the enemy, thinking that he would capture the men by starvation. [20] Consequently Paulos and the four hundred passed that day without food and bivouacked during the night in the same condition. On the following day, however, they resolved to feed on some of the horses but, although they were extremely hard-pressed by hunger, they were restrained by a reluctance owing to the unusual nature of this food, until late afternoon. [21] At that time, after long deliberation among themselves and after exhorting one another to boldness, they came to the conclusion that the better course for them was to end their lives then and there by a glorious death. [22] They decided to make a sudden dash against their enemy, to kill as many of them as each man could, and thus all of them would meet his death valiantly. [23] They clasped each other with their arms and, kissing one another's cheeks, held their friends in a last embrace on the point of death, intending one and all to perish immediately. [24] But Totila understood this and began to fear that men who were bent on death and had no further hope for safety would inflict irreparable harm upon the Goths. [25] He therefore sent to them and offered them a choice of two alternatives, either to leave their horses and arms there, take an oath not to fight against the Goths again, and depart for Byzantion without suffering any harm, or, on the other hand, to keep their own possessions and fight thereafter in the Gothic army, in full and complete equality with the Goths. [26] These proposals were heard gladly by the Romans. At first, to be sure, all were for going to Byzantion, but later, ashamed to make their withdrawal on foot and without arms, and dreading also that they would fall into some ambushes during their departure and be destroyed; and bearing a grudge, furthermore, because the Roman treasury owed them pay for a long period, they all voluntarily joined the Gothic army, except for Paulos and one of the Isaurians, Mindes by name, who came before Totila and asked to be sent to Byzantion. [27] They stated that they had children and wives in their native land, without whom they were unable to live. [28] Totila received their request with favor, believing that they were speaking the truth, and he released them after presenting them with traveling money and sending an escort with them. There were others also of the Roman army, those who had chanced to take refuge in the sanctuaries of the city, about three hundred in number, who received pledges and went over to Totila. [29] As for Rome itself, Totila was unwilling thereafter either to dismantle or to abandon it; instead, he decided to settle there both Goths and Romans, the members of the senate and all the others, for the following reason.

37. Not long before this Totila had sent to the ruler of the Franks asking to give his own daughter to him in marriage. [2] But he spurned the request, declaring that Totila was not nor ever would be king of Italy, seeing that after capturing Rome he had been unable to hold it but, after tearing down a portion of it, he had let it fall again into the hands of his enemy. [3] Consequently, he made haste on the present occasion to bring supplies into the city and gave orders to rebuild as quickly as possible everything that he himself had pulled down and destroyed by fire when he had captured Rome the previous time. Then he summoned the members of the Roman senate and all the others whom he had under guard in Campania. [4] After witnessing the horse races there, he made ready his whole army, intending to make an expedition against Sicily. [5] At the same time he also put his four hundred warships in readiness for naval fighting, as well as a fleet of many large ships that had been sent there from the East by the emperor and that he, during all this time, had had the fortune to capture, crews, cargoes, and all. [6] He also sent a Roman named Stephanus as an envoy to the emperor, requesting that he end this war and make a treaty with the Goths, the terms being that they would fight as his allies against his other enemies. [7] But the emperor Justinian would not permit the envoy even to come into his presence, nor did he pay the least attention to anything
early he said. [8] When Totila heard this, he again set about making preparations for the war.
550 It seemed to him advantageous to first make trial of Centumcellae and then to move against Sicily. [9] The garrison there was commanded by Diogenes, the spearman of Belisarios, and he had a sufficient force under him. [10] So the Gothic army, when it reached Centumcellae, made camp close to the circuit-wall and commenced a siege. [11] Totila sent envoys to Diogenes and challenged him and his soldiers, if they wanted to settle the issue by battle with the Goths, to set to it immediately. [12] He also advised them to have no hope that further reinforcements from the emperor would reach them; [13] for Justinian, he said, was unable to carry on this war against the Goths any longer, to judge by the events that had been taking place at Rome for so long. [14] He therefore allowed them to choose which of two alternatives they wanted, either to join the Gothic army on terms of complete equality or to depart from the city without suffering harm and go off to Byzantion. [15] But the Romans and Diogenes said that they did not want either to fight a decisive battle or, on the other hand, to join the Gothic army, because they would find it impossible to live without their children and their wives. [16] As for the city they were guarding, they were quite unable at present to surrender it with any plausible excuse, as they had, in fact, not even a pretext for doing so at that time, particularly if they wished to present themselves before the emperor. [17] They did, however, beg him to defer the matter for a while, so that they could report the situation to the emperor in the meantime and, if no relief came to them in the interval, then they would leave the city and surrender it to the Goths, while they, for their part, would not be without justification in leaving it. [18] This was approved by Totila, and a definite day was agreed upon; then thirty men were given as hostages by each side to make this agreement binding, and the Goths broke up the siege and proceeded against Sicily. [19] But when they came to Reggio, they did not cross the strait there before making trial

of the fortress of that city. [20] The garrison there was commanded by Thurimuth and Himerios, whom Belisarios had appointed to that post. [21] Having under them a large force of excellent men, they not only repulsed the enemy when they attacked the wall, but also made a sally and had the upper hand in combat. [22] Later, however, as they were far outnumbered by their opponents, they were shut up inside the circuit-wall and remained quiet. [23] So Totila left part of the Gothic army there to guard the place, expecting that at a later time they would capture the Roman garrison through failure of the food supply; meanwhile, he sent an army against Taranto and took over the fortress there with no difficulty. Likewise, the Goths whom he had left in Picenum took the city of Rimini at that time by treason.

[24] When the emperor Justinian heard all this, he formed a plan to appoint his nephew Germanos commander in chief in the war against the Goths and Totila, and he directed him to make ready. When news of this reached Italy, the Goths became deeply concerned, for the reputation of Germanos happened to be positive among all men. [25] The Romans immediately became confident one and all, and the soldiers of the emperor's army began to meet danger and hardship with more endurance. [26] But the emperor for some unknown reason changed his mind and decided to appoint to the post Liberius, a Roman whom I have mentioned in the preceding narrative,[725] in place of Germanos. [27] Liberius did in fact make preparations with all possible speed, and it was expected that he would set sail immediately with an army. But again the emperor changed his mind, and consequently he too remained at rest. [28] It was at this time that Vera with a band of excellent warriors whom he had gathered about him came to an engagement not far from the city of Ravenna with the Goths who were in Picenum, and he not only lost many of his followers but was also killed himself after showing himself a brave man in the encounter.

38. At that time an army of Slavs amounting to not more than three thousand crossed *early*
the Danube river without encountering any opposition, advanced immediately to the *550*
Hebros river, which they crossed with no difficulty, and then split into two groups. [2] The one group contained eighteen hundred men, while the other had the remainder. [3] Even though the two sections were separated from each other, the commanders of the Roman army, upon engaging with them, both in Illyria and in Thrace, were defeated unexpectedly, and some of them were killed on the field of battle while others saved themselves by a disorderly flight. [4] After all the generals had fared thus at the hands of the two barbarian armies, one section of the enemy engaged with Asbados, although they were far inferior to the Roman forces in number. [5] He was a spearman of the emperor Justinian, as he served among the *candidati*, as they are called, and he was also commander of the cavalry units that from ancient times have been stationed at Tzouroulon, the fortress in Thrace, a numerous body of the best soldiers. [6] These too the Slavs routed with no trouble and slew most of them in a most disgraceful flight; they

725. 7.36.6.

also captured Asbados and briefly held him prisoner, but afterward they burned him by casting him into a fire, having first flayed strips from the man's back. [7] After accomplishing these things, they turned to plunder all the towns of Thrace and Illyria, in safety. Both armies captured many fortresses by siege, although they had never stormed city walls before nor dared to come down to the open plain, for these barbarians had never, in fact, even attempted to overrun the land of the Romans. [8] Indeed, it appears that they have never crossed the Danube river with an army before this occasion that I have here mentioned.[726]

[9] Then those who had defeated Asbados systematically plundered everything as far as the sea and captured by storm a city on the coast named Toperos, although it had a garrison of soldiers. It is the first of the coastal towns of Thrace and is twelve days' journey distant from Byzantion. They captured it in the following way. [10] Most of them concealed themselves in the rough ground before the fortifications, while a few went near the gate that is toward the east and began to harass the Romans at the battlements. [11] Then the soldiers keeping guard there, supposing that they were no more than those who were seen, immediately took up arms and one and all sallied out against them. [12] The barbarians began to withdraw to the rear, making it appear to their attackers that they were retreating because they were thoroughly frightened of them, and the Romans, drawn into the pursuit, found themselves at a considerable distance from the fortifications. [13] Then the men in ambush rose from their hiding places and, placing themselves behind the pursuers, made it impossible for them to enter the city. [14] And those who had seemed to be in flight turned around, and thus the Romans were now exposed to attack on two sides. The barbarians destroyed them to the last man and assaulted the fortifications. [15] The inhabitants of the city, who were deprived of the support of the soldiers, found themselves in a difficult situation and defended themselves against the attackers as well as circumstances permitted. [16] At first they resisted successfully by heating oil and pitch and pouring it down on those who were attacking the wall, and the whole population joined in hurling stones upon them and thus came close to repelling the danger. [17] But the barbarians overwhelmed them by the multitude of their missiles and forced them to abandon the battlements, whereupon they placed ladders against the fortifications and so captured the city by storm. [18] They slew all the men immediately, to the number of fifteen thousand, took all the valuables as plunder, and enslaved the children and women. [19] Before this, however, they had spared no age, but both they and the other group, since the time when they fell upon the land of the Romans, had been killing all who fell in their way, regardless of age, so that the whole land of Illyria and Thrace came to be everywhere filled with unburied corpses. [20] They killed their victims not with sword or spear, nor in any other familiar way, but by planting stakes very firmly in the earth, having made them extremely sharp, and, by impaling the poor wretches upon them with great force, drove the point of the

726. Yet Prokopios has referred to a number of invasions across the Danube by Slavs and Antai; see 7.13.24–26, 7.14.2–11, and 7.29.1–3. Is he referring here to this particular group only? But he does not differentiate it from the rest.

stake between the buttocks and pushed it up into the intestines. That was how they preferred to kill them. [21] These barbarians also had a method of planting four thick stakes very deep in the ground and, after binding the hands and feet of the captives to them, they would then assiduously beat them over the head with clubs, killing them like dogs, snakes, or some other beast. [22] Others again they would imprison in their huts together with their cattle and sheep—those, of course, which they were unable to take with them to their native haunts—and then they would set fire to the huts without mercy. Thus did the Slavs consistently destroy those who fell in their way. [23] But from this time onward both groups, being as it were drunk with the great quantity of blood they had shed, decided to make prisoners of some who fell into their hands, and consequently they were taking with them countless thousands of prisoners when they all departed to go home.

39. The Goths later assaulted the fortress of Reggio, but the besieged continued to defend themselves vigorously and repulsed them, and Thurimuth was always conspicuous for the deeds of heroism he performed against them. [2] But Totila found out that the besieged lacked provisions, and so he left part of his army there to keep guard and prevent the enemy from bringing in anything thereafter and force them, by lack of supplies, to surrender themselves and the fortress to the Goths. Meanwhile, he himself crossed over to Sicily with the rest of the army and attacked the wall of Messina. [3] Domnentiolos, the nephew of Bouzes, who was in command of the Romans there, met him before the walls and was not defeated in the engagement that ensued. [4] But he went back into the city and remained quiet, attending to guarding the place. The Goths, however, plundered practically the whole of Sicily as no one came out against them. [5] The Romans besieged in Reggio, commanded by Thurimuth and Himerios, as I said, saw that their provisions had failed completely, came to terms, and surrendered themselves and the fortress to the enemy. *550*

[6] When the emperor heard these things, he gathered a fleet and embarked on these ships a considerable army formed from infantry units; appointing Liberius to command them, he ordered him to sail with all speed for Sicily and exert all his force to save the island. [7] But he quickly repented of having appointed Liberius commander of the fleet, for he was an extremely old man and lacked experience of military operations. [8] Then he absolved Artabanes from all the charges against him,[727] and, appointing him general of the armies of Thrace, immediately sent him to Sicily, providing him with an army of no great size but instructing him to take over the fleet commanded by Liberius, as he was summoning Liberius to Byzantion. [9] But as commander in chief in the war against Totila and the Goths he appointed Germanos, his own nephew. He did not give him a large army, but he provided him with a large amount of money and directed him to gather a formidable army from Thrace and Illyria and hasten to Italy. [10] He further instructed him to take with him to Italy both Filimuth the Herul with his men and his

727. I.e., the charges stemming from the plot recounted at 7.32.

own son-in-law Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos; for Ioannes, as general of the armies of Illyria now, was stationed there.

[11] Then a great ambition took hold of Germanos to achieve for himself the overthrow of the Goths, so that he would be credited with recovering both Libya and Italy for the Roman empire. [12] When Stotzas had established his tyranny in Libya and was holding power there most securely, he had exceeded all expectations by defeating the rebels in battle, having been sent there by the emperor at the time; he put an end to the tyranny and once more recovered Libya for the Roman empire, as I have recounted in a previous book.[728] [13] And now that the affairs of Italy were in the condition that I have just described, he wished to win for himself great glory in that field by showing himself able to recover this too for the emperor. [14] Now his first move, made possible by the fact that his wife, who was named Passara, had died long before, was to marry Matasuntha, the daughter of Amalasuntha and granddaughter of Theoderic, as Vittigis had already passed from the world. [15] For he hoped that, if the woman was with him in the army, the Goths would probably be ashamed to take up arms against her, as they would recall the rule of Theoderic and Athalaric. [16] Then, by spending great sums of money, part of which was provided by the emperor but most of which he furnished unstintingly from his own resources, he easily succeeded, contrary to expectation, in raising a great army of very warlike men in a short amount of time. [17] For among the Romans, men who were experienced fighters disregarded the officers whose spearmen and guardsmen they were and followed Germanos; they came from Byzantion and also from the towns of Thrace and Illyria, and his sons Ioustinos and Ioustinianos displayed great zeal in this recruitment drive, [18] for he had taken them also on his departure. He also enrolled some from the cavalry units stationed in Thrace, with the emperor's permission. [19] The barbarians also, who had their homes near the Danube river kept coming in great numbers, attracted by the fame of Germanos, and, upon receiving large sums of money, joined the Roman army. [20] Other barbarians too kept flocking to his standards, collected from the whole world. The ruler of the Lombards also made ready a thousand heavy-armed soldiers and promised to send them immediately.[729]

[21] When these things were reported in Italy, with such additions as rumor usually makes as it spreads among men, the Goths were both frightened and perplexed at the same time, being faced with the prospect of making war against the family of Theoderic. [22] But the Roman soldiers who chanced to be fighting unwillingly in the ranks of the Goths sent a messenger to Germanos with orders to state to him that, as soon as they saw that he had arrived in Italy and his army was actually encamped, they too would certainly array themselves with his soldiers, without any hesitation. [23] All this brought fresh courage to the detachments of the emperor's army in Ravenna and whatever other cities chanced to be left in their hands, and being now filled with the highest hopes they were determined to guard the towns rigorously for the emperor. [24]

728. 4.17–18.

729. This was Audoin, on whom see 7.35.17–20.

Moreover, all who had formerly engaged with the enemy under Vera or other officers and had escaped after being defeated in battle by their opponents, and were dispersed and wandering about, each man to wherever chance led him, all these, then, as soon as they heard that Germanos was on the way, gathered in Istria and there remained quiet, awaiting this army. [25] At this time Totila sent to Diogenes (for the time agreed upon by him regarding Centumcellae had arrived), and commanded him to surrender the city in accordance with the agreement. [26] Diogenes, however, said that he personally no longer had authority to do this; for he had heard that Germanos had been appointed commander in chief to carry on that war, and was not far away with his army. [27] He added that, as for the hostages, he wanted to receive his own back and to return those given by the Goths. [28] Then, after dismissing the messengers, he turned his attention to the defense of the city, expecting Germanos and the army with him. [29] Such was the course of these events; and the winter drew to its close, and the fifteenth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[730]

40. But while Germanos was collecting and organizing his army in Serdica, the city of Illyria, and making all the necessary preparations for war with the greatest thoroughness, a host of Slavs such as never before was known arrived on Roman soil, having crossed the Danube river and come to the vicinity of Naissus. [2] A few of them had scattered from their army and, wandering around the country there alone, were captured by some of the Romans and made prisoners. They were interrogated as to why this army of the Slavs had crossed the Danube and what they hoped to accomplish. [3] They firmly declared that they had come to capture by siege both Thessalonike itself and the cities around it. When the emperor heard this, he was stunned and immediately wrote to Germanos that he should postpone for the moment his expedition to Italy and defend Thessalonike and the other cities, and repel the invasion of the Slavs with all his power. So Germanos devoted himself to this problem. [4] But the Slavs, upon learning definitely from their captives that Germanos was in Serdica, began to be afraid; [5] for Germanos had a great reputation among these particular barbarians for the following reason. During the reign of Justin,[731] the uncle of Germanos, the Antai, who live close to the Slavs, had crossed the Danube river with a great army and invaded the Roman land. [6] The emperor had not long before this, as it happened, appointed Germanos general of all Thrace. He engaged with the hostile army, defeated them decisively in battle, and killed practically all of them; and Germanos, as a result of this achievement, had covered himself with great glory in the estimation of all men, especially of these same barbarians. [7] So they dreaded him, as I said, and also because they supposed that he was leading a formidable force, seeing that he was being sent by the emperor against Totila and the Goths, the Slavs immediately turned aside from their march on Thessalonike and no longer dared to come down into the plain; instead, they crossed

summer 550

730. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 549 to spring 550.

731. Modern editors have emended the text here to say "Justinian," but this is certainly wrong.

the mountain ranges of Illyria and came to Dalmatia. [8] Germanos, accordingly, paid no further attention to them and issued orders to the entire army to prepare for marching, intending to begin the journey to Italy two days later. [9] But by some chance he fell sick and abruptly reached the term of life. Thus did Germanos suddenly pass away, a man who was brave and remarkably energetic; for in war he was not only a most able general, but was also resourceful and independent in action, while in peace and prosperity he understood well how to uphold the laws with firmness and the order of the republic. As a judge he was more upright than anyone else, while in private life he made loans of large sums of money to all who requested it and never so much as spoke of taking interest from them. Both in the palace and the forum he was a man of very impressive personality and serious demeanor, while in his daily home life he was a pleasant, liberal, and charming host. He would not permit, as far as his strength allowed, any offense in the palace against the established order, nor did he ever share either in the purpose or the conversations of the conspirators in Byzantion, although many went so far in their unnatural conduct, even those in power. Such then was the course of these events.

[10] The emperor was deeply moved by this misfortune, and commanded Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos and son-in-law of Germanos, in company with Ioustinianos, one of the two sons of Germanos, to lead this army into Italy. [11] So they set out on the way to Dalmatia, intending to pass the winter at Salona, as it seemed to them impossible at that season to make the circuit of the gulf in order to reach Italy; and it was impossible for them to ferry across as they had no ships. [12] Now Liberius, not having yet learned anything of the emperor's change of purpose regarding the fleet he commanded, put in at Syracuse while it was under siege by the enemy. [13] He forced his way through the barbarian lines, sailed into the harbor, and so got inside the circuit-wall with the whole fleet. [14] Artabanes not long after this reached Kephallonia and, finding that Liberius and his army had put out to sea and departed from there for Sicily, he immediately set out from there and crossed the Adriatic Sea. [15] But when he came near Calabria, he was buffeted by a terrific storm and a headwind of extraordinary violence, and all the ships were scattered so completely that it appeared that most of them had been driven to the shore of Calabria and fallen into the hands of the enemy. [16] This, however, was not the case, but they had first been driven apart by the great violence of the wind, then had turned about, driven against their will, and had reached the Peloponnese again. As for the other ships, some were lost and some saved, according to where chance carried them. [17] One ship, that in which Artabanes himself was sailing, had its mast broken off in this heavy sea and yet, after coming into such a state of danger, was carried by the surge and followed the swell until it came to land at the island of Malta. Thus Artabanes was saved contrary to expectation.

mid- to late 550

[18] Liberius now found himself unable to make sallies against the besiegers or to fight a decisive battle against them, while at the same time his provisions could not possibly suffice for a long time, seeing as they were a large force, and so he set sail from there with his men and, eluding the enemy, withdrew to Palermo. [19] Totila and the

Goths had meanwhile plundered practically the whole land of Sicily; they were leading a vast number of horses and other animals, and had stripped the island of grain and all its other crops. These, together with all the treasure, a great sum indeed, they loaded on their ships and then suddenly left the island and returned to Italy, being impelled for the following reason. [20] Not long before this, as it happened, Totila had appointed one of the Romans, Spinus by name, a native of Spoleto, to be his personal adviser. [21] This man was staying in Catania, an unwalled city. By some chance, it came about that he fell into the hands of the enemy there. [22] Totila, being eager to rescue this man, wanted to release to the Romans in his place a notable's wife who was his prisoner. [23] But the Romans would not agree to accept a woman in exchange for a man holding the position of *quaestor*, as it is called. [24] The man now feared that he might be killed by the enemy and so promised the Romans that he would persuade Totila to depart immediately from Sicily and cross over to Italy with the whole Gothic army. [25] They first bound him by oaths to carry out this promise and then gave him back to the Goths, receiving the woman in return. [26] He then went before Totila and asserted that the Goths were not looking to their own interests, now that they had plundered practically all of Sicily, in remaining there for a few insignificant fortresses. [27] For he declared that he had recently heard, while he was among the enemy, that Germanos, the emperor's nephew, had passed from the world and that Ioannes, his son-in-law, and Ioustinianos, his son, with the whole army collected by Germanos were already in Dalmatia and would move on from there, after completing their preparations in the briefest time, straight for Liguria, in order, obviously, to descend suddenly upon the Goths and make slaves of their women and children and to plunder all their valuables; and it would be better, he said, if we were there to meet them, passing the winter in safety with our families. [28] "If we overcome that army," he added, "it will be possible for us at the opening of spring to renew our operations against Sicily free from anxiety and with no thought of an enemy in our minds." [29] Totila was convinced by this suggestion and so, leaving guards in four strongholds, he crossed over with all the rest of the army to Italy, taking with him all the plunder. Such was the course of these events.

[30] Now Ioannes and the emperor's army, upon reaching Dalmatia, decided to *late*
pass the winter at Salona, intending to march from there straight for Ravenna after the *550*
winter season. [31] But the Slavs now reappeared, both those who had previously come into the emperor's land, as I have recounted above,[732] and others who had crossed the Danube not long afterward and joined the first, and they began to overrun the Roman empire with complete freedom. [32] Some people suspected that Totila had bribed these barbarians with large gifts of money and so set them upon the Romans there, in order to make it impossible for the emperor to manage the war against the Goths well because of his preoccupation with these barbarians. [33] As to whether the Slavs were doing a favor for Totila or came there without invitation, I am unable to say. These barbarians did, in any case, divide themselves into three groups and inflicted irreparable

732. 7.40.1–7.

damage on all of Europe,[733] not merely plundering that country by sudden raids but actually spending the winter as if it were their own land and they had no fear of the enemy. [34] Afterward, however, the emperor Justinian sent a large army against them, led by a number of commanders including Konstantianos, Aratios, Nazares, Ioustinos, the son of Germanos, and Ioannes, whom they called the Eater. [35] He placed in command over them all Scholastikos, one of the eunuchs of the palace. [36] This army came upon a part of the barbarians near Adrianople, which lies in the interior of Thrace, five days' journey distant from Byzantion. [37] The barbarians were unable to proceed further, for they were hauling with them booty beyond reckoning, consisting of men and animals and valuables of every kind. [38] So they remained there, eager to do battle with the enemy, but without letting this be known to them in any way. Now the Slavs were encamped on the hill that rises there, while the Romans were in the plain not far away. [39] A long time was consumed in thus blocking the enemy, so the soldiers began to lose their patience and take it badly, accusing the generals that while they themselves, as officers of the Roman army, were well supplied, they were overlooking the soldiers, who were being hard-pressed by a lack of necessities, and that they were also unwilling to engage with the enemy. [40] This forced the generals to join battle with the enemy. The battle was fierce, and the Romans were decisively defeated. [41] In that battle many of the best soldiers perished and the generals came within a little of falling into the hands of the enemy, succeeding only with difficulty in making their escape with the remnant of the army and thus saving themselves, each as best he could. [42] The standard of Konstantianos was captured by the barbarians, who now moved forward heedless of the Roman army. [43] They plundered the land of Astike, as it is called, at their leisure, a place that had not been ravaged since ancient times, and for this reason it turned out that they found there an enormous booty. They devastated a wide expanse of country and came as far as the Long Walls, which are a little more than one day's journey distant from Byzantion. [44] Not long afterward the Roman army, in following up these barbarians, came upon part of their force, engaged with them suddenly, and put them to flight. [45] They slew many of the enemy, but also rescued a vast number of Roman captives, and they also found and recovered the standard of Konstantianos. The rest of the barbarians departed for home with their other plunder.

early 551

733. I.e., the Balkans.

Book Eight

1. The narrative that I have written up to this point has been composed, as far as possible, by separating the material into books that focus on the different theaters of war, and these books have already been published and have appeared in every corner of the Roman empire. But from this point onward I will not follow this arrangement. [2] For after my writings had appeared before the public, I was no longer able to add to each section the events that happened afterward; now that I have already published the previous books, all the later developments in these wars, and in the war against Persia as well, will be written down in full in this book, which will of necessity be a composite history. [3] Now all that took place up to the fourth year of the five-year truce that was made between the Romans and the Persians has already been recounted by me in
549 the previous books. But in the following year a huge Persian army invaded the land of Kolchis. [4] In command of this army was a Persian, Chorianes by name, a man of wide experience in many wars, and many barbarian allies from the tribe of the Alans followed him. [5] When this army came to a part of Lazike that is called Mocheresis, they made camp in a suitable position and remained there. [6] A river flows past that place, the Hippis,[734] not a large or navigable stream, but passable for both cavalry and men on foot, and it was on the right of this that they made their entrenchment, not by the bank but at a considerable distance from it. [7] But so that my readers understand the geography of Lazike and know what races of men inhabit that region, and so that they are not forced to discuss matters that are obscure to them, like men fighting with shadows, it seems to me not inappropriate to pause at this point in the narrative and give an account of the distribution of the peoples who live around the Black Sea. I am not unaware that these things have been treated by some ancient writers also, but I believe that not all their statements are accurate. [8] Some of these writers have stated that the people of Trebizond are neighbors of the Sanoi, who today are called Tzanoi, or of the Kolchians, and they call another people Lazoi, who are actually addressed by this name at the present day.[735] Yet neither of these statements is true. [9] The Tzanoi live at a great distance from the coast,[736] being neighbors of the Armenians in the interior, and many mountains stand in between that are thoroughly impassable and vertically steep, and there is an extensive area always devoid of human habitation, canyons from which it is impossible to climb out, forested heights, and impassable chasms—all this prevents the Tzanoi from being on the sea. [10] In the second place, it is impossible that the Lazoi should not be the Kolchians, because they live by the Phasis river; and the Kolchians

734. Usually identified as the Tshkenistsqali (Horse River).

735. E.g., Xenophon, *Anabasis* 4.8.22; Arrian, *Periplous* 11.

736. For the Tzanoi, see also 1.15.19–25.

have merely changed their name at the present time to Lazoi, just as nations of men and many other things do. [11] In addition, a long time has elapsed since these accounts were written and this, along with the march of events, has caused constant changes, with the result that many conditions that were formerly obtained have been replaced by new ones, because of the migration of nations and the succession of rulers and names. [12] These things it has seemed to me necessary to investigate, not relating the mythological tales about them nor their ancient history, nor even telling in what part of the Black Sea the poets say Prometheus was bound [13]—for I consider that history is quite different from mythology—but stating accurately and in order both the names of each of those places and the facts that apply to them at the present day.

2. The Black Sea, then, begins at Byzantion and Chalkedon and ends at the land of the Kolchians. [2] As one sails into it, the land on the right is inhabited by the Bithynians, and next after them by the Honoriatai and the Paphlagonians, who have, besides other towns, the coastal cities of Herakleia and Amastris; beyond them are the people called Pontians as far as the city of Trebizond and its boundaries. In that region are a number of towns on the coast, including Sinope and Amisos, and close to Amisos is the town called Themiskouron and the river Thermodon, where they say that the army of the Amazons originated. But concerning the Amazons I will write a little later.[737] [3] From here the territory of Trebizond extends to the village of Sousourmena and the place called Rizaion, which is two days' journey distant from Trebizond as one goes toward Lazike along the coast. [4] Now that I have mentioned Trebizond, I must not omit the strange thing that happens there,[738] for the honey that is produced in all the places around Trebizond is bitter,[739] the only place where it is at odds with its established reputation. [5] On the right of these places rise all the mountains of Tzanike, and beyond them are the Armenians who are subject to the Romans. [6] Now from these mountains of Tzanike descends the Boas river, which passes through countless thickets and traverses a mountainous region, flows past the land of Lazike, and empties into the Black Sea, but no longer keeping the name of Boas. [7] For when it reaches the sea, it loses this name and thereafter bears another, which it acquires from the character it now displays. [8] The locals hereafter call it the Akampsis, and they so name it, obviously, because it is impossible to resist as it enters the sea,[740] given that it discharges its stream with such force and swiftness, causing a great disturbance in the water before it, that it goes out for a very great distance into the sea and makes it impossible to coast along at that point. Those who are navigating in that part of the sea, whether sailing toward Lazike or putting out from there, are not able to hold a straight course in their voyage; [9] for they are quite unable to cut through the river's current, but they are forced to go out a great

737. 8.3.5–11.

738. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 2.61.3.

739. Cf. Xenophon, *Anabasis* 4.8.20–21; the soldiers became ill after eating the local honey.

740. At 2.29.16, Prokopios had erroneously claimed that the Boas turns into the Phasis.

distance into the sea there, going somewhere near the middle of it, and only in this way can they escape the force of the river's discharge. So much, then, about the Boas river.

[10] Beyond Rizaion are found the boundaries of independent peoples who live between the Romans and the Lazoi. There is a certain village there named Athens,[741] not, as some suppose, because Athenian colonists settled there but because a certain woman named Athenaia in early times ruled over the land, and her tomb is there even to my day. [11] Beyond Athens are Archabis and Apsaros, an ancient city about three days' journey from Rizaion. [12] This was called Apsyrtos in ancient times, named after the man on account of his misfortune. For it was there that, the locals say, Apsyrtos was removed from the world by the plot of Medeia and Jason, and hence the place received its name; for he died there and the place was named after him. [13] But an extremely long time has since elapsed in which countless generations of men have flourished; this has managed to dampen the vividness of the events from which the name arose and to transform it to the form it currently has. [14] There is also a tomb of this Apsyrtos to the east of the city.[742] This was a populous city in ancient times and a great wall surrounded it, while it was adorned with a theater, hippodrome, and all other things by which the size of a city is commonly indicated. But now none of these is left except the foundations of the buildings.

[15] Thus one might with good reason wonder at those who assert that the Kolchians are neighbors of the Trapezuntines. For on this hypothesis it would seem that after Jason with Medeia had captured the fleece, he did not flee toward Greece and his own land but backward to the Phasis river and the barbarians in the most remote interior. [16] They say that in the time of the Roman emperor Trajan units of Roman soldiers were stationed there and as far as the Lazoi and Saginai.[743] [17] But the people who live there now are subjects neither of the Romans nor the king of the Lazoi, except that the bishops of the Lazoi appoint their priests, seeing as they are Christians. [18] Wishing to live in peace and friendship with both peoples, they have made a permanent agreement to provide an escort for those who periodically travel from one country to the other, and it appears that they have been doing this even down to my time. [19] They escort the messengers dispatched from the one king to the other, sailing in boats of their own. However, they are not tributary down to the present time. [20] On the right of these places very steep mountains tower overhead and a barren land extends to an indefinite distance. Beyond this live the so-called Persarmenians and the Armenians who are subjects of the Romans, extending as far as the borders of Iberia.

[21] From the city of Apsaros to Petra and the borders of Lazike, where the Black Sea ends, is a journey of one day. Now as this sea comes to an end here, its coast takes the form of a crescent. [22] The distance across this crescent amounts to about 550 stades,

741. It is mentioned also by Arrian, *Periplous* 3–5, who says that it was abandoned.

742. All the above information about Apsyrtos/Apsaros comes from Arrian, *Periplous* 6. Apsyrtos was the brother of Medeia, killed by her in different ways according to different versions of the story.

743. Prokopios is here following Arrian, *Periplous* 11 (changing Sanigai to Saginai).

while the entire country behind it is Lazike and is called that. [23] Behind them in the interior are Skymnia and Souania; these nations happen to be subjects of the Lazoi. Although these peoples do have magistrates of their own blood, still, whenever any of the magistrates reaches the end of his life, it is always customary for another one to be appointed in his place by the king of the Lazoi. [24] To the side of this land and bordering upon Iberia proper live the Meschoi, who have been subjects of the Iberians from ancient times, with their homes in the mountains. [25] The mountains of the Meschoi are not rough nor barren of crops, but they abound in all good things, as the Meschoi are skillful farmers and there are actually vineyards in their country. [26] However, this land is hemmed in by mountains that are very tall and forested so that they are extremely difficult to pass through. They extend as far as the Caucasus, while behind them toward the east is Iberia, extending to Persarmenia. [27] The Phasis river descends from the mountains that rise here, having its source in the Caucasus and its mouth at the middle of the crescent of the sea. [28] Because of this some consider that it forms the boundary between the two continents, for the land on the left as one goes down this stream is Asia, but that on the right is named Europe. [29] It happens that all the habitations of the Lazoi are on the European side, while on the opposite side there is neither fortress nor stronghold nor any village of consequence held by the Lazoi, except indeed the city of Petra, which the Romans built formerly.[744] [30] It was somewhere in this part of Lazike, the locals say, that the famous fleece was placed for safekeeping, the one for which the *Argo* was built, as the poets tell the tale. But in saying this they are, in my opinion, not telling the truth at all. [31] I think that Jason would not have eluded Aietes and got away from there with the fleece together with Medeia had the palace and the other dwellings of the Kolchians not been separated by the Phasis river from the place where the fleece was lying; in fact, the poets who tell the story imply as much. [32] So the Phasis, flowing as I have said, empties into the Black Sea approximately at the very point where the latter comes to an end. At the one end of the crescent, which is in Asia, is the city of Petra, while on the opposite coast, which is a part of Europe, the land belongs to the Apsilioi. [33] The Apsilioi are subjects of the Lazoi and have been Christians from ancient times, just as all the other nations I have mentioned so far in my narrative.

3. Above and beyond this country are the Caucasus mountains. This mountain range, the Caucasus, rises to such a great height that its summits are never touched by rain or by snow, for they are above the clouds. But the middle slopes are continually filled with snow down to the very base. [2] From this it appears that the foothills are extremely high, being in no way inferior to the peaks of other mountains. [3] Now of the spurs of the Caucasus range, those that are turned to the north and west extend into Illyria and Thrace,[745] while toward the east and south they reach as far as the passes that provide entrance for the Hunnic

744. See also 2.29.17–21.

745. There was confusion about the Caucasus in antiquity. In some accounts it reached west to the Adriatic Sea or east to the Hindu Kush.

nations inhabiting that region into both Persian and Roman territory. [4] One of these passes is called Tzour, while the other has been named the Caspian Gates from ancient times.[746] The country that extends from the Caucasus range to the Caspian Gates is held by the Alans, an autonomous nation, who are for the most part allied with the Persians and march against the Romans and their other enemies. So much then about the Caucasus.

[5] The Huns who are called Sabeiroi live in that region, as well as certain other Hunnic tribes. It is here that they say the Amazons really originated and established their camp near Themiskouron on the Thermodon river, as I stated above,[747] at the place where the city of Amisos is at the present time. [6] But no memory of the Amazons is preserved today anywhere in the vicinity of the Caucasus range nor even their name, although much has been written about them both by Strabo and others.[748] [7] It seems to me that the truth about the Amazons has been spoken better than any others by those who have stated that there never was a race of manly women and that human nature did not depart from its established norms in the mountains of the Caucasus, and there alone.[749] The fact is that barbarians from these regions with their own women invaded Asia with a large army, established a camp by the river Thermodon, and left the women there; then, while they themselves were overrunning the greater part of Asia, they were encountered by the inhabitants of the land and utterly destroyed, and not one of them returned to the women's encampment. Thereafter these women, through fear of the people living all round and compelled by a lack of supplies, dressed themselves like men against their will and, taking up the equipment of arms left behind by the men in the camp and arming themselves in excellent fashion with this, they performed deeds of manly valor, being driven to do so by sheer necessity, until they were all destroyed. [8] I too believe that this is roughly what happened and that the Amazons did make an expedition with their husbands, and I cite as evidence what has actually taken place in my time. [9] For customs handed down to remote descendants form an image of the character of former generations. [10] Specifically, when Huns have made raids into the Roman domain and engaged in battle with those who resisted them, some, of course, have fallen there and, after the departure of the barbarians, the Romans, in searching the bodies of the fallen have actually found women among them.[750] [11] No other army of women, however, has made its appearance anywhere in Asia or Europe. On the other hand, we have no tradition that the Caucasus mountains were ever devoid of men. So let this suffice concerning the Amazons.

[12] The Abasgoi live along the coast beyond the Apsilioi and the other end of the crescent, their country extending as far as the Caucasus mountains. The Abasgoi have been

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746. These two passes are probably the same, on the coast of the Caspian Sea.

747. 8.2.2.

748. Strabo, *Geography* 11.5, 12.3, 12.21.

749. Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.13.4–5, cannot believe that the Amazons did not ever exist.

750. This was a common motif in accounts of Roman warfare; cf. Plutarch, *Pompeius* 35.3–5; Appian, *Mithridatic War* 103; *Historia Augusta: Aurelian* 34.1; Zonaras, *Chronicle* 12.23 (based on a lost ancient source about Odenathos of Palmyra).

subjects of the Lazoi from ancient times, but they have always had two rulers of their own blood. [13] One of them was established in the western part of their land, the other in the eastern part. [14] These barbarians have worshipped groves and forests down to my time, for with a sort of barbarian simplicity they supposed the trees were gods. [15] But they have suffered most cruelly at the hands of their rulers on account of their excessive avarice. Both their kings used to take the boys of this nation whom they noted as having pretty features and fine bodies and, dragging them away from their parents without the least hesitation, they would make them eunuchs and then sell them at high prices to anyone in Roman territory who wished to buy them. [16] They killed the fathers of these boys immediately, so that none of them might attempt at some time to exact vengeance from the king for the wrong done to their boys, and also so that they might not have suspect subjects. Thus the physical beauty of their sons was resulting in their destruction, [17] and the poor wretches were being destroyed by the misfortune of having children who were fatally beautiful. It was because of this that most eunuchs among the Romans, and especially at the emperor's court, happened to be Abasgoi by birth. [18] But during the reign of the present emperor Justinian everything has changed for the Abasgoi and made them more civilized. [19] They have espoused the Christian doctrine and the emperor Justinian also sent them one of the eunuchs from the palace, an Abasgos by birth named Euphratas, commanding their kings through him in explicit terms to mutilate no male thereafter in this nation by doing violence to nature with the knife. This the Abasgoi heard gladly [20] and, taking courage now because of the decree of the emperor of the Romans, they began to strive with all their might to block this practice. For each of them dreaded having beautiful children.[751] [21] It was at that same time that the emperor Justinian built a sanctuary of the Virgin in their land, appointed priests for them, and brought it about that they learned thoroughly all the observances of the Christians; and the Abasgoi immediately dethroned both their kings and seemed to be living in freedom.[752] Thus, then, did these things take place.

4. Beyond the borders of the Abasgoi along the Caucasus range live the Brouchoi, between the Abasgoi and the Alans, while the Zechoi are established along the coast of the Black Sea. [2] Now in ancient times it was the emperor of the Romans who used to appoint a king over the Zechoi, but at present these barbarians are in no way subject to the Romans. [3] Beyond these live the Saginai, and the Romans held a portion of their coast from ancient times. [4] They constructed two fortresses on the coast, Sebastopolis and Pityous, two days' journey apart, and maintained in them garrisons of soldiers from the beginning. [5] In earlier times units of Roman soldiers held all the towns on the coast from the limits of Trebizond as far as the Saginai, as previously stated,[753] but now these two fortresses were the only ones left to them, and maintained their garrisons even up to my day. When Chosroes, the king of the Persians, was brought in by the Lazoi to

751. In 558 Justinian outlawed castration, without mentioning Abasgia specifically (*Novel* 142).
752. See 8.9.10–12 for how this too turned out badly because of Roman oppression.
753. 8.2.16.

Petra, he made haste to send an army of Persians there who were to take possession of these fortresses and settle down to garrison them. [6] But the Roman soldiers succeeded in learning this in advance and, anticipating him, set fire to the houses and razed the walls to the ground, and then with no hesitation embarked in small boats and sailed directly to the city of Trebizond on the opposite mainland. Thus, while they harmed the Roman empire by the destruction of the fortresses, at the same time they gained for it a great advantage in that the enemy did not take over the land. As a result of their action the Persians returned empty-handed to Petra. Thus, then, did this take place.

[7] Above the Saginai are established numerous Hunnic tribes. From there on the country is named Eulysia, and barbarian peoples hold both the coast and interior of this land as far as the Sea of Azov and the Don river, which empties into the sea. [8] This sea opens up to the coast of the Black Sea. The people who are settled there were named in ancient times Cimmerians but are now called Utigurs. [9] Above them to the north are established the countless tribes of the Antai. But beside the exact point where the outlet of the Sea of Azov begins live the Goths called Tetraxitai, a people who are not very numerous, and who revere and observe the rites of the Christians no less than anyone else. [10] The inhabitants indeed give the name Tanaïs [Don] also to this outlet, which starts from the Sea of Azov and reaches to the Black Sea, a distance, they say, of twenty days' journey. They also call the wind that blows from there the Tanaïtis. [11] Now as to whether these Goths were once of the Arian belief, as the other Gothic nations are, or whether the faith they practiced has shown some other peculiarity, I am unable to say, for they themselves do not know; at the present time they honor the faith in complete simplicity and with no vain questionings. [12] This people a short time ago (namely, when the emperor Justinian was in the twenty-first year of his reign) sent four envoys to Byzantion, begging him to give *547–548* them a bishop; for the one who had been their priest had died not long before and they had learned that the emperor had sent a priest even to the Abasgoi. The emperor Justinian willingly complied with their request and sent them away. [13] Now these envoys were moved by fear of the Utigur Huns and so when they explained in public the reason for which they had come—for there were many who heard these speeches—they addressed the emperor only regarding the matter of the priest but, meeting him also with the greatest possible secrecy, they declared everything, showing that it would be in the interest of the Roman empire if the neighboring barbarians were always on hostile terms with each other. I turn now to explain how the Tetraxitai settled there and from where they migrated.

5. In ancient times a vast host of the Huns who were then called Cimmerians ranged over this region that I have just mentioned, and one king had authority over them all. [2] At one time this power was secured by a man who had two sons, one of whom was named Utigur and the other Kutrigur. [3] These two sons, when their father came to the end of his life, divided the power between them and each gave his own name to his subjects: [4] so the one group has been called Utigurs and the other Kutrigurs even to my time. All these now continued to live in this region, associating freely in all the business of life but not mingling with the people who were settled on the other side of

the Sea of Azov and its outlet; for they never crossed these waters at any time nor did they suspect that they could be crossed, being afraid of something that was really easy simply because they had never attempted to cross and remained utterly ignorant of the possibility. [5] Now beyond the Sea of Azov and the outlet flowing from it, the first people were the Goths called Tetraxitai, whom I have just mentioned, who in ancient times lived close by its shore; the Goths, Visigoths, and Vandals were located far from them as were other Gothic nations. [6] These Tetraxitai were called also Skythians in ancient times, because all the nations who held these regions are called Skythians in common, but some of them are also called Sauromatai, Melanchlainoi, or something else. [7] As time went on, they say—if, indeed, the story is sound—some youths of the Cimmerians were engaged in hunting and a single doe that was fleeing before them jumped into these waters. [8] The youths, moved either by a thirst for glory or in some sort of competition, or perhaps some supernatural power drove them to it, followed this doe and absolutely refused to let her go until they came with her to the opposite shore. [9] Then the quarry, whatever it was, immediately disappeared from sight; for in my opinion it appeared there for no other purpose than that evil might befall the barbarians who lived in that region. Thus, while the youths failed in their hunt, they now found an incentive to battle and plunder. [10] They returned as fast as they could to their own land and revealed to all the Cimmerians that these waters could be crossed by them. Accordingly, they immediately took up arms as a nation and, making the crossing with no delay, reached the opposite mainland—this was when the Vandals had already left from there and established themselves in Libya, when the Visigoths had taken up their abode in Spain.[754] [11] So they suddenly fell upon the Goths who inhabited these plains and killed many of them, turning the rest to flight. [12] Those who managed to escape migrated from there with their women and children, leaving their ancestral lands. By ferrying across the Danube river, they came into the land of the Romans. [13] At first they inflicted much harm upon the inhabitants of that region, but later, with the emperor's permission, they settled in Thrace.[755] They fought on the side of the Romans, receiving pay from the emperor every year just as the other soldiers did, and they were called *foederati*; for so the Romans at that time called them in Latin, indicating, I think, that the Goths had not been defeated by them in war but had made a treaty with them. [14] The Latins call treaties in war *foedera*, as I explained in a previous book.[756] But they also waged war against the Romans for no good reason, until they went off to Italy under the leadership of Theoderic. Thus, then, did the Goths fare.

[15] The Huns, after killing some of them and driving out the others, as stated, took possession of the land. The Kutrigurs summoned their children and wives and settled there in the place where they have lived even to my time. [16] Although they receive many gifts

754. I.e., around the mid-fifth century.

755. Prokopios seems here to be referring to the migration of another group of Goths into the empire in the mid-fifth century, who eventually joined Theoderic (see below), not to the Tetraxitai (whose story is told at 8.5.18–22).

756. 3.11.4.

from the emperor every year, they still continually cross the Danube river and overrun the emperor's land, being both at peace and at war with the Romans. [17] The Utigurs, however, departed for home with their leader, living alone in that land thereafter. [18] Now when these Huns came near the Sea of Azov, they chanced upon the Goths there who are called Tetraxitai. [19] At first the Goths formed a barrier with their shields and made a stand against their assailants in their own defense, trusting in their strength and the advantage of their position; for they are the most hardy of all the barbarians of that region. [20] Now the head of the outlet of the Sea of Azov, where the Tetraxitai Goths were then settled,[757] forms a crescent-shaped bay by which they were almost completely surrounded, so that only one approach, and that not a very wide one, was open to those who attacked them. [21] But afterward, as the Huns were unwilling to waste any time there and the Goths could not hope to hold out for long against the throng of their enemy, they came to an understanding with each other, agreeing to join forces and make the crossing in common; and the Goths would settle on the opposite mainland, mainly along the bank of the outlet (where they are actually settled now),[758] and would continue thereafter to be friends and allies of the Utigurs and live forever on terms of complete equality with them. [22] Thus it was that these Goths settled here, and while the Kutrigurs, as I have said, were left behind in the land on the other side of the sea, the Utigurs held the land alone, making no trouble at all for the Romans; after all, they do not even live near them but, being separated by many nations that lie between, they are forced, unwillingly, not to meddle with them.

[23] So the Kutrigur Huns settled over most of the plains of that region beyond the Sea of Azov and the Don river, as I have said. Beyond them Skythians and Tauroi hold the entire country, part of which is even now called Taurike; and this is where they say the temple of Artemis was over which Agamemnon's daughter Iphigeneia once presided. [24] The Armenians, however, claim that this temple was in a part of their land called Kelesene, and that at that period all the peoples of this region were called Skythians, citing as evidence the story of Orestes and the city of Komana that I told in that part of my narrative.[759] [25] But regarding these matters, let each person speak as he wishes. Many things that happened elsewhere or, perhaps, never really happened at all, men like to appropriate for their own country, and then become indignant if everyone else does not follow their opinion. [26] Beyond these nations there is an inhabited city by the sea, Bosporos by name, which became subject to the Romans not long ago.[760] [27] Barbarians, Hunnic nations, hold everything between the city of Bosporos and the city of Cherson, which is

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757. I.e., by the Gulf of Kerch.

758. I.e., in the Crimea.

759. 1.17.13–20.

760. The Bosporan kingdom had been a client state of Rome. It declined severely after the late third century, and seems to have been annexed by Justinian ca. 530. In 528, a king of the Huns in the Crimea named Grod came to Constantinople and was converted, but upon his return he destroyed the idols of his people and was killed by them; the Huns then sacked Bosporos, fearing the Romans, because there was a garrison there (Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.14; Theophanes, *Chronographia* a.m. 6020 [pp. 175–76]). It was after this that Justinian sent both an army and a fleet to restore order to the city and its hinterland.

situated on the coast and is also subject to the Romans, albeit since ancient times. [28] Two other towns near Cherson, named Kepoi and Phanagouris, have been subject to the Romans from ancient times and even to my day. But these not long ago were captured by some of the neighboring barbarians and razed to the ground. [29] From the city of Cherson to the mouth of the Danube river, which is also called the Ister, is a journey of ten days, and barbarians hold that whole region. [30] Now the Danube river rises in the Celtic mountains, skirts the edges of Italy, flows into the regions of Dacia, Illyria, and Thrace, and finally empties into the Black Sea. From that point all the territory as far as Byzantion is under the sway of the emperor of the Romans. [31] Such is the circuit of the Black Sea from Chalkedon to Byzantion. [32] As to the length of this circuit, however, I am unable to speak accurately about all portions of it, as such vast numbers of barbarians, as stated above, live along its shores, and the Romans have no dealings with any of them except for the odd exchange of embassies. Indeed, those who have attempted to measure this have not been able to form any definite conclusion. [33] This, however, is clear, that the right side of the Black Sea, namely from Chalkedon to the Phasis river, is a journey of fifty-two days for an active traveler. From this fact one could not unreasonably draw the conclusion that the length of the other side of the Pontus is not far from this.

6. Having reached this point in the exposition, it seems to me a good place to mention the opinions concerning the boundaries of Asia and Europe which are debated among the experts in this field. [2] On the one hand, some of them say that these two continents are separated by the Don river, strongly asserting that the division must be a natural one and supporting their claim by the fact that, while the sea extends from the west toward the east, the Don river flows from the north toward the south between the two continents; similarly, they say, the Egyptian Nile proceeds in the opposite direction from the south to the north and flows between Asia and Libya.[761] [3] On the other hand, others take issue directly with them and maintain that their reasoning is not sound. They say that these two continents are divided originally by the strait at Cadiz, which comes out from the Ocean, and by the sea that extends from that point on, and that the land on the right of the strait and the sea is called Libya and Asia, while everything on the left was named Europe approximately as far as the end of the Black Sea. [4] On this hypothesis, the Don river rises within the limits of Europe and empties into the Sea of Azov, which in turn discharges its waters into the Black Sea neither at its end nor even at its middle, but beyond it. [5] Yet the land on the left of the Black Sea is counted as a part of Asia. Apart from this, the river Don rises in the so-called Ripaian mountains, which are in the land of Europe, as those who have written about these matters from ancient times agree.[762] [6] The Ocean is far removed from these Ripaian mountains, so

761. For the Nile as separating Asia and Libya, see Strabo, *Geography* 2.5.26. For the debate over the role of the Don as a divider, see Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.30.9. In the ancient sources it is called the Tanaïs, and there was much confusion about what river the name designated.

762. E.g., Strabo, *Geography* 7.3.1; Pliny, *Natural History* 4.79, 488; Pomponius Mela, *Description of the World* 1.109, 1.115–17.

all the land beyond them and the Don river on both sides must necessarily be European. [7] Just at what point, then, the Don river begins to divide the two continents it is not easy to say. If any river must be said to divide the two continents, that would surely be the Phasis. [8] For it flows in a direction opposite to that of the strait of Cadiz, and so passes between the two continents, for while the strait, coming out of the Ocean and forming this sea, has these two continents on either side, the Phasis river flows almost at the end of the Black Sea and empties into the middle of the crescent, thereby obviously continuing the division of the land heretofore made by the sea.[763] [9] These then are the arguments that the two sides put forth as they dispute the question. I will show that not only the former argument but also that which I have just stated can boast that they are ancient and enjoy the support of some men of very ancient times. I am aware that as a general thing all men, if they first discover an ancient argument, are no longer willing to devote themselves to the labor involved in the search for the truth,[764] nor to learn some later theory about the matter in its place, but the more ancient view always seems to them sound and honorable, while contemporary opinions are regarded as contemptible and are classified as ridiculous. [10] Furthermore, in the present case the investigation is not about some intellectual or intelligible level of reality, or anything else obscure, but about rivers and lands; these are things which time has not been able either to change or conceal in any way. [11] For proof is easy to come by and mere sight provides the most satisfactory evidence, and I think that no obstacle will be found in the way of those eager to discover the truth. [12] Herodotos of Halikarnassos, then, in the fourth book of his *Histories* says that the entire earth is one but is considered to be divided into three parts and three names: Libya, Asia, and Europe.[765] [13] Between Libya and Asia flows the Egyptian Nile, while Asia and Europe are divided by the Kolchian Phasis. Knowing that some thought that the Don river performed this function, he mentioned this view afterward. [14] It seems to me appropriate to insert in my exposition the actual words of Herodotos, which are as follows: "Nor am I able to conjecture for what reason it is that, although the earth is one, three names are applied to it that belong to women. The lines of division have been established as the Egyptian Nile and the Kolchian Phasis. [15] But others name the Don river, which empties into the Sea of Azov and the Cimmerian strait." The tragic poet Aischylos in the *Prometheus Unbound*, at the very beginning of the tragedy, calls the Phasis river the limit of the land of both Asia and Europe.[766]

[16] At this point I will also mention the fact that some experts in these matters think that the Sea of Azov creates the Black Sea, and that the latter flows out from the former partly to the right and partly to the left, this being the reason why the Sea of Azov is called the mother of the Black Sea. [17] They make this statement on the basis of the observation that from the place called Hieron the outlet of the Black Sea

763. I.e., in an east-west direction.

764. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 1.20.3.

765. Herodotos, *Histories* 4.45.

766. Aischylos *fr.* 104, 106. Prokopios has this from Arrian, *Periplous* 19.

flows down toward Byzantion just as if it were a river, and consequently they consider this to be the limit of that sea. [18] But those who oppose this view explain that the entire sea is, of course, one, coming from the Ocean and, without any other ending, extends to the land of the Lazoi, unless, they say, anyone considers the mere change of name to constitute a real difference, seeing as it is simply called the Black Sea after a certain point. [19] But if the current does flow down from the place called Hieron to Byzantion, this is irrelevant. Phenomena exhibited in all straits appear to be inexplicable, nor has anyone ever been able to account for them. [20] Indeed, this was the question that led Aristotle of Stageira, an especially wise man, to go to Chalkis on Euboia, where he studied the strait they call Euripos in an effort to discover by careful investigation the physical reason why and how the current of the strait sometimes flows from the west but at other times from the east, and all boats there must sail accordingly: if the current is coming from the east and the sailors have begun to sail their boats from the direction following the inflow of the water, as they are accustomed to do, and then the current reverses direction, as tends to happen there often, it immediately turns these boats back in the direction from which they have come, while other boats then sail from the west to the opposite end, even though no wind has blown upon them in the least but deep calm prevails there with all winds absent. All this the Stagirite observed and pondered for a long time, until he worried himself to death with anxious thought and so reached the term of his life.[767] [21] But this is not an isolated case, for in the strait that separates Italy from Sicily nature also plays many strange tricks. For it appears that the current runs into this strait from the sea called the Adriatic, [22] and this in spite of the fact that the general movement of the sea is *from* the Ocean and Cadiz. But there are also numerous whirlpools that appear there suddenly from no cause apparent to us and destroy the ships. [23] It is on account of this that poets say that the boats are gulped down by Charybdis, when they chance to be in this strait at such a time. [24] Others think that the strange phenomena that occur in all straits are caused by the two headlands converging; for the water, they say, being constrained by the limited space, is subject to some odd and unaccountable compulsion. [25] Consequently, if the current does seem to flow from the place called Hieron to Byzantion, no one could reasonably claim that both the sea and the Black Sea end at that point. [26] This view rests upon no solid basis of nature, but here again the narrowness of the channel prevails. Indeed, that is not all that happens here, [27] for the fishermen of the towns here say that the whole stream does not flow in the direction of Byzantion: while the upper current that we can see does flow in this direction, the deeper water of the abyss, as it is called, moves in a direction exactly opposite to that of the upper current, and so flows continually against the current which is seen. [28] Consequently, whenever in going after a catch of fish they cast their nets there anywhere, these are always carried by the force of the current toward Hieron. [29] But in Lazike the land checks the advance of the sea on all sides

767. Aristotle died at Chalkis in 322 BC, a year after he left Athens, which had taken an anti-Macedonian turn. Later sources even claimed that he drowned investigating the cause of the tides there.

and puts a stop to its movement, and thus makes its first and only ending at that point, the Creator obviously having set bounds there for the sea and land. [30] When the sea touches that beach, it neither advances farther nor rises to any higher level, although it is constantly receiving the inflow of countless rivers of extraordinary size that empty into it from all sides; still, it falls back and returns again, and thus, while pacing itself by its proper measure, it preserves the limit set by the land as if it fears some law and, through the necessity it imposes, checks itself with precision and taking care not to be found to have transgressed the agreement in any way. [31] For all the other shores of the sea do not check it frontally, but lie along its side. At any rate, concerning these matters let each man form his decision and speak as he wishes.

7. Now the reason why Chosroes was eager to gain possession of Lazike has already been stated by me in a previous book;[768] I will now explain what, more than anything else, drove him and the Persians to desire this, since I have given a tour of this whole country with a clear description of it. [2] Many times these barbarians, under the leadership of Chosroes, had invaded the Roman domain with a large army and, while they had inflicted upon their enemy sufferings not easy to describe, as has been told by me in the books on this subject, still they gained from these invasions no advantage whatsoever and had also to bear the loss of both treasure and lives, for they always departed from the Roman domain having lost many men. [3] Consequently, after they had returned to their own land, they would rail against Chosroes, albeit in the utmost secrecy, and call him the destroyer of the Persian nation. [4] On one such occasion when they had returned from Lazike after suffering terrible losses there, they were on the point of combining openly against him and doing away with him by a most cruel death, and they would have done so had he not learned in advance and guarded against it by winning over their most notable men through excessive flattery.[769] [5] As a result of this incident, he was eager to gain some great advantage for the Persian empire in order to defend himself against the accusation. He accordingly made an attempt upon the city of Daras, but met with reverse there, as I have told,[770] and came to despair that he would ever capture the place. [6] He could thereafter capture it neither by surprise attack, as the guards of the city were alert, nor did he hope that he would get the better of them in a siege by some device. [7] For there is always an abundant supply of all manner of provisions in the city of Daras stored away against a siege, so that it may last for a great length of time, and close by there is a spring placed by nature in the cliffs that creates a large river which flows straight toward the city, and those who seek to interfere with it are unable to turn it to any other course or otherwise force it on account of the rough terrain. [8] But as soon as this river gets inside the circuit-wall, it flows about the entire

768. 2.28.17–18.

769. This refers probably to the Lazike campaign of 541; see 2.15, 2.17, and *Secret History* 2.26–37.

770. 2.28.31–37.

city, filling its cisterns, and then flows out, whereupon it falls into a chasm near the circuit-wall and is lost to sight. [9] And where it emerges again from there has become discovered by no man up to this time. Now this chasm was not there in ancient times, but a long time after the emperor Anastasios built this city nature by itself made and placed it there, and for this reason those who desire to draw a siege around the city of Daras are hard-pressed by scarcity of water.[771]

[10] So Chosroes, having failed in this attempt, as I said, came to the conclusion that, even if he were able to gain some other Roman city, he would still never be able to establish himself in the midst of the Romans while many strongholds were left behind in enemy hands. [11] It was for this reason that he razed Antioch to the ground when he captured it and then departed from Roman soil. Consequently his thoughts soared aloft and were carried toward more distant hopes as he planned impossible things. [12] He learned by report how the barbarians to the left of the Black Sea who live about the Sea of Azov overrun the Roman domain at will,[772] and kept saying that it would be possible for the Persians, if they held Lazike, to go whenever they wished, straight to Byzantion with no trouble and without crossing the sea, just as the other barbarian nations who are settled in that region are always doing. [13] For this reason, then, the Persians are trying to gain Lazike. But I return to the point where I made this digression from the narrative.

549 **8.** Chorianes, then,[773] and the army of the Medes had made their camp by the Hippis river. When Goubazes, the king of the Kolchians, and Dagisthaios, commanding the Roman army, learned this, they consulted together and led the Roman and Lazic army against the enemy. [2] When they reached the opposite side of the Hippis river and had made their camp there, they began to consider the situation, debating whether it would be more advantageous to wait there and receive the enemy's attack or whether they should advance upon their enemy, in order to display their daring to the Persians and so, by making it clear to their opponents that they were coming against them filled with contempt and taking the lead in the engagement, to be in a position to humble the spirit of the men arrayed against them. [3] The opinion of those who urged an advance upon the enemy prevailed, and so all immediately hastened toward them. Thereupon the Lazoi would no longer consent to fight beside the Romans, objecting that the latter, in entering the struggle, were not risking their lives for their fatherland or their most precious possessions, whereas for them the danger involved their wives, children, and ancestral land; [4] so that they would be shamed before their own women, if it should happen that they were defeated by their opponents. Indeed, they imagined that under this stress they would improvise a valor that was not in them. [5] They were filled with

771. For the details on the fortifications and water supply of Daras, see *Buildings* 2.1–3, likely a later account, esp. 2.2.19–21 for the failure of Persian armies to capture the place.

772. I.e., the Kutrigurs.

773. This picks up from 8.1.3–4.

eagerness to engage with the enemy by themselves first, so that the Romans might not throw them into confusion during the action by not having the same zeal as they did in meeting the danger. [6] After the Lazoi began to show this spirit of bravado, Goubazes was pleased and, calling them together a little apart from the Romans, he exhorted them as follows:

Goubazes to the Lazoi

> Men, I do not know whether it is necessary to exhort you to courage. [7] For those whose enthusiasm is sustained by the necessity of the situation would, I think, need no further exhortation, and this is the case with us in the present crisis. [8] For the danger involves our women, children, and ancestral land, and, to speak plainly, our all, which is what the Persians are coming for. [9] No one in the whole world gives way to those who are seeking by violence to rob him of any of his possessions; nature compels him to fight for his belongings. [10] You are not ignorant that nothing stops the avarice of the Persians when they have power in their grasp, and if they now prevail over us in the war they will not stop at simply ruling us or imposing taxes or treating us in other matters as subjects—in case we forget what Chosroes attempted upon us not long ago. [11] But let me not even so much as mention the experience we have had with the Persians, and let not the name of the Lazoi come to an end. The struggle against the Medes, my men, is not a difficult one for us who have so many times battled them and prevailed over them in the fight. [12] There is nothing difficult in matters that we have become used to, the necessary labor having been previously spent in practice and experience. Consequently we must despise the enemy as having been defeated in previous combats and lacking the same ground for boldness as you do. [13] For when the spirit has been humbled, it tends not to rebound again. Think about these things and advance with high hopes against the enemy.

[14] After making this speech, Goubazes led out the army of the Lazoi, and they arrayed themselves as follows. In front the cavalry of the Lazoi advanced in order against the enemy, while the Roman cavalry followed them, not at a short distance but far in the rear. [15] These Romans were under the leadership of Philegagos, a Gepid by birth and an energetic man, and Ioannes the Armenian, son of Thomas, an exceptionally able warrior who was known by the surname Gouzes and has been mentioned already in a previous book.[774] [16] Behind them followed Goubazes, the king of the Lazoi, and Dagisthaios, the general of the Romans, with the infantry of both armies, reasoning that, if the cavalry were routed, they would be saved easily by falling back on them. [17] So the Romans and the Lazoi arrayed themselves in this manner. Chorianes meanwhile selected from his men a thousand men who were armed and armored in the best way and sent them forward as scouts, while he himself marched in the rear with the rest of the army, leaving behind in the camp a garrison of a few men. [18] Now the cavalry of the Lazoi that had gone ahead showed in what they did little respect for their orders, subverting their previous hopes by their action. [19] When they came suddenly upon

774. 2.30.4.

the advance party of the enemy, they did not bear the sight of them but immediately wheeled their horses around and began to gallop back to the rear in complete disorder. In their rush they joined in with the Romans, not refusing to take refuge with the very men beside whom they had previously been unwilling to array themselves. [20] When the two forces came close to each other, neither side at first opened the attack or joined battle, but each army drew back as their opponents advanced and in turn followed them as they withdrew, and they consumed much time in retreats, counter-pursuits, and swiftly executed changes of front.

[21] But there was a certain Artabanes in the Roman army, a Persarmenian by birth, who had deserted long before to the Armenians who are subjects of the Romans, not as a simple deserter however, but he had given the Romans a pledge of his loyalty to them by the slaughter of 120 Persian warriors. [22] He had come before Valerianos, who at that time was a general in Armenia,[775] and requested him to give him fifty Romans. His request was granted and he proceeded to a fortress in Persarmenia. [23] There a garrison of 120 Persians received him with his company into the fortress, as it was not yet clear that he had changed his allegiance and gone over to the enemy. [24] He then killed the 120 men and plundered all the money in the fortress, which was a considerable sum, and came to Valerianos and the Roman army. Having proved himself faithful to them, thereafter he marched with the Romans. [25] In the present battle this Artabanes placed himself in the space between the armies, taking with him two of the Roman soldiers, and some of the enemy also came there. [26] Artabanes charged these men and, engaging with one of the Persians who was a man of spirited valor and great bodily strength, he killed him immediately with his spear and, throwing him from his horse, brought him down to the ground. [27] One of the barbarians standing beside the fallen man struck Artabanes on the head with a sword, but not a mortal blow. Then one of the followers of Artabanes, a Goth by birth, attacked this man while he still held his arm by Artabanes' head, struck him with a well-directed blow in the left flank, and took him out. [28] Thereupon the thousand, being terrified at what had taken place, began to withdraw to the rear, where they awaited Chorianes and the rest of the army of Persians and Alans, and in a short time joined up with them.

[29] By this time the infantry under Goubazes and Dagisthaios also came up with their cavalry and both armies closed to a hand-to-hand battle. [30] At this point Philegagos and Ioannes, thinking that they were too few to withstand the charge of the barbarian horse, particularly because they had no confidence in the force of the Lazoi, leaped from their horses and compelled all to do the same, both Romans and Lazoi. [31] They then arrayed themselves on foot in a phalanx, as deep as possible, and all stood with a front facing the enemy and thrusting out their spears against them. [32] The barbarians did not know what to do, for they were unable to charge their opponents, who were now on foot, nor could they break their phalanx, because the horses, afraid of the spear-points and the clashing of the shields, balked; and so

775. I.e., between 541 and 547.

they all resorted to their bows, emboldened by the hope that by a rain of missiles they would easily rout their enemy. [33] The Romans and all the Lazoi began to do exactly the same. So from each side the arrows were flying thickly into both armies, and on both sides many men were falling. [34] Now the Persians and Alans were discharging their missiles in a practically continuous stream and much faster than their opponents. However, the Roman shields blocked most of them. In the course of this battle Chorianes, the commander of the Persians, happened to be hit. [35] By whom he was wounded was not clear to anyone; some chance guided the shaft as it came out of a crowded mass of men, fastened itself in the man's neck, and killed him outright, and so by one man's death the battle turned and victory fell to the Romans. [36] As he fell from his horse, his mouth bit the ground and he lay there, and the barbarians rushed wildly to their stockade, while the Romans with the Lazoi followed upon their heels and killed many, hoping to capture the camp of their opponents with one rush. [37] But one of the Alans, who was a man of great courage and bodily strength and who knew unusually well how to shoot rapidly to either side, took his stand at the entrance of the stockade, which was narrow, and unexpectedly blocked the oncoming Romans for a long time. [38] But Ioannes, the son of Thomas, came up to him alone and instantly killed the man with a spear, and so the Romans and Lazoi captured the camp. Most of the barbarians were killed there, and the rest departed for their native land, each as he was able. [39] So this invasion of the Persians into the land of Kolchis ended in this way. Meanwhile, another Persian army departed, after fortifying the garrison at Petra with an abundance of provisions and all other supplies.

9. In the meantime the following took place. The Lazoi went to Byzantion and were *549/*
slandering Dagisthaios to the emperor, charging him with treason and Medizing. [2] *550*
They declared that he had been persuaded by the Persians not to force his way across the fallen circuit-wall of Petra, while the enemy in the interval had filled bags with sand and laid courses with them instead of with stones, and thus had strengthened the parts of the wall that had fallen down.[776] [3] They stated that Dagisthaios, whether through a bribe or negligence, had postponed the attack to some other time and had thus let slip for the moment the precious opportunity which, of course, he had never again been able to grasp. [4] The emperor consequently placed him under house arrest. He then appointed Bessas, who had returned not long before from Italy, as general of Armenia
and sent him to Lazike with orders to command the Roman army there. [5] Venilos, the *550*
brother of Bouzes, had also been sent there already with an army, as well as Odonachos, Babas from Thrace, and Uligag of the Heruls. [6] Now Nabedes had invaded Lazike with an army, but he accomplished nothing of consequence beyond spending some time with this army among the Abasgoi, who had revolted from the Romans and Lazoi, and taking from them sixty children of their nobles as hostages. [7] Nabedes then made a detour and captured Theodora, the wife of Opsites (he was the uncle of Goubazes and

776. 2.29.

king of the Lazoi),[777] finding her among the Apsilioi, and took her off to Persia.[778] [8] This woman happened to be a Roman by birth, for the kings of the Lazoi from ancient times had been sending to Byzantion, and, with the emperor's consent, arranging marriages with some of the senators and taking home their wives from there. [9] Even Goubazes was sprung from a Roman family on his mother's side.[779] I will now explain why the Abasgoi rebelled.

[10] When they had removed their own kings from power, as I recounted above,[780] Roman soldiers sent by the emperor began to be generally quartered among them, and they sought to annex the land to the Roman empire, imposing some new regulations on them. [11] As these were severe, the Abasgoi hated them. Fearing that they would be mere slaves of the Romans thereafter, they restored their rulers to power, one named Opsites in the eastern part of their country, and Skeparnas in the west. [12] Thus, because they despaired of seeing better times, they naturally wanted to restore their prior state of affairs, which had seemed to them oppressive but what had come after was much worse. They were in fear of the power of the Romans and went over to the Persians as secretly as possible. When the emperor Justinian heard this, he ordered Bessas to send a strong army against them. [13] He accordingly selected a large number from the Roman army, appointed to command them Uligag and Ioannes, the son of Thomas, and immediately sent them by sea against the Abasgoi. Now it happened that one of the rulers of the Abasgoi, the one named Skeparnas, was away for some reason among the Persians; [14] for he had gone under summons not long before to Chosroes. But the other ruler, learning of the inroad of the Romans, mustered all the Abasgoi and hastened to encounter them.

[15] There is a place beyond the boundary of Apsilia on the road into Abasgia that is like this: a tall mountain runs out from the Caucasus and gradually sinks, as it runs along, to a lower level, resembling a stairway, until it comes to an end at the Black Sea. [16] The Abasgoi in ancient times built an extremely strong fortress of considerable size on the lower slope of this mountain. [17] Here they always take refuge and repel the inroads of their enemies, who have no way to storm the difficult position. There is only one path leading to this fortress and to the rest of the land of the Abasgoi, and this is impassable for men marching by twos. [18] There is no way to pass except in single file and on foot, and that with difficulty. Above this path rises the side of an extremely rough gorge that extends from the fortress to the sea. [19] And the place bears a name worthy of the gorge, for the inhabitants call it Tracheia, using a Greek word. [20] So the Roman fleet put in between the boundaries of the Abasgoi and Apsilioi; Ioannes

777. There is no other record of Opsites being king of the Lazoi. We find out below he was king of the Abasgoi.

778. It is not clear how Nabedes (last seen in 543 at Anglon; see 2.25) reached Apsilia.

779. Ztathios, king of the Lazoi (522–ca. 527), who changed allegiance from Persia to Rome, married a Roman lady, Valeriana, the granddaughter of Nomos, consul in 445 (Malalas, *Chronicle* 17.9). She was possibly the mother of Goubazes.

780. 8.4.21.

and Uligag disembarked their soldiers and proceeded on foot, while the sailors followed the army along the coast with all the boats. [21] When they came close to Tracheia, they saw the entire force of the Abasgoi fully armed and standing in order along the whole gorge above the path I have just mentioned, whereupon they fell into great perplexity because they had no way to deal with the situation before them, until Ioannes, after deliberating long with himself, discovered a solution for their predicament. [22] Leaving Uligag there with half the army, he took the others and manned the boats. By rowing they rounded the site of Tracheia, passed it entirely, and got behind the enemy. [23] They raised their standards and advanced. The Abasgoi, seeing the enemy pressing upon them from both sides, no longer offered resistance nor even kept their ranks, but turned to withdraw in a disorderly retreat; they kept pushing forward but were so impeded by fear and the helplessness that came with it that they were no longer able to find their way in the rough terrain of their native country, nor could they easily get away from the place. [24] The Romans meanwhile were following them up from either side and caught and killed many. They reached the fortress on the run together with the fugitives and found the small gate there still open; for the guards could by no means shut the gates, as they were still taking in the fugitives. [25] So pursued and pursuers mixed together were all rushing toward the gate, the former eager to save themselves, the latter to capture the fortress. [26] Finding the gates open, they charged through them together, for the gatekeepers were neither able to distinguish the Abasgoi from the enemy nor to shut the gates given the press of the throng. [27] Though feeling relief at getting inside the fortress, the Abasgoi were actually being captured with the fortress, while the Romans, thinking they had mastered their opponents, found themselves involved there in a more difficult struggle. [28] For the houses were numerous and not far from each other—they were crowded so close as to be like a wall—and the Abasgoi climbed them and defended themselves with all their strength by shooting upon the heads of their enemy, driven on by pain, fear, pity for their women and children, and their desperate situation, until it occurred to the Romans to set fire to the houses. [29] They lit fires on all sides, and thus were completely victorious in this struggle. Now Opsites, the ruler of the Abasgoi, managed to escape with only a few men, withdrawing to the neighboring Huns and the Caucasus mountains. [30] But the others were either charred and burned to ashes with their houses or fell into the hands of their enemy. The Romans captured the women of their rulers with all their children, razed the walls of the fortress to the ground, and made the land desolate to a great distance. This, then, was the result of the rebellion for the Abasgoi. But among the Apsilioi the following took place.

10. The Apsilioi have been subjects of the Lazoi from ancient times. There is in this land an extremely strong fortress which the natives call Tzibile. [2] One of the notables of the Lazoi, Terdetes by name, who held the office of *magister*, as it is called, in this nation, had fallen out with Goubazes, the king of the Lazoi, and was hostile to him. He secretly promised the Persians to hand this fortress over to them, and he came to Apsilia

leading an army of Persians to accomplish this. [3] When they came to the fortress, he himself went ahead with his Lazoi followers and got inside the fortifications, because those keeping guard there could not disobey a commander of the Lazoi, having no suspicion of him. Thus when the Persian army arrived Terdetes received it into the fortress. [4] As a result the Medes considered that not Lazike alone, but also Apsilia was held by them. Meanwhile neither the Romans nor the Lazoi were in a position to defend the Apsilioi, being preoccupied by the task of dealing with Petra and the Mede army. [5] But there was a certain woman who was the wife of the commander of the garrison there, one of the Apsilioi, and extremely beautiful to look upon. The commander of the Persian army suddenly fell passionately in love with this woman, and he began to make advances, but after that, as he was making no progress with her, he attempted to outright rape her. [6] At this the husband of the woman became extremely enraged, and at night he killed both the commander and all who had entered the fortress with him, who thereby became collateral victims of their commander's lust, and he himself took charge of the fortress. On account of this the Apsilioi revolted from the Kolchians, alleging against them that, while the Apsilioi were being oppressed by the Persians, they had not taken their side. [7] But Goubazes sent a thousand Romans and Ioannes, the son of Thomas, whom I have recently mentioned, against them. This man succeeded, after long efforts at conciliation, in winning them over without a fight and made them once more subjects of the Lazoi. Such was the story of the Apsilioi and the fortress of Tzibile.

550 [8] At this time it came about that not even Chosroes' son remained untouched by the king's inhumanity. The eldest of his sons, named Anushazad (in Persian this means "Immortal"), fell out with him, in part for the multiple offenses of his lifestyle but in particular because he shamelessly had sex with his father's wives. At first, then, Chosroes punished his son by banishment. [9] There is a land in Persia called Vazaïne, an extremely good country, where the city named Belapaton is situated, seven days' journey distant from Ktesiphon.[781] [10] Anushazad was living there by order of his father. But it then happened that Chosroes became violently ill, so that it was even said that he had died; for Chosroes was sickly by nature. [11] He would often gather around him physicians from everywhere, among whom was the physician Tribounos, a Palestinian by birth. [12] Tribounos was learned and inferior to none in medical skill, and was furthermore a temperate and God-fearing man of the highest worth. [13] On one occasion he had cured Chosroes of a serious illness and, when he left from the land of the Persians, he carried with him many and notable gifts from his patient. [14] When the truce before this one was made, Chosroes demanded of the emperor Justinian that he give him this Tribounos to stay with him for a year. This demand was granted, as I said above,[782] and Chosroes urged Tribounos to ask for whatever he wanted. [15] He asked for nothing else in the world except that Chosroes should release for him some of the

781. Belapaton is probably Gundeshapur (south of modern Shahabad), which in Syriac was Bet Lapat. It was a center of learning and medicine. Vazaïne was Khuzestan, its name derived from Syriac Bet Huzaye.

782. 2.28.10.

Roman captives. [16] So he released three thousand for him, in addition to all whom he requested by name as being notable men among the captives, and as a result of this incident Tribounos won great renown among all men. Thus did these events take place.

[17] When Anushazad learned of his father's disease, he began to stir up a revolution in order to usurp the royal power. [18] Even though his father recovered, he nevertheless set the city in revolt himself and, taking up arms against him, went out fully prepared for battle. [19] When Chosroes heard this, he sent an army against him with Phabrizos as general. Phabrizos prevailed in the battle, captured Anushazad, and brought him before Chosroes soon afterward. [20] He caused the eyes of his son to be disfigured, not destroying their sight but damaging the upper and lower lids in an ugly fashion. [21] He heated an iron needle in the fire and with it seared the outside of his son's eyes when they were shut, thus marring the beauty of the lids. [22] Chosroes did this for only one reason, that his son's hope of achieving the royal power might be frustrated. For the law does not permit a man who has a disfigurement to become king over the Persians, as I stated above also.[783]

11. As for Anushazad, then, his fortune and his character brought him to that. When the fifth year of the truce had now come to an end, [2] the emperor Justinian sent *550*
Petros, a patrician who held the office of *magister*, to Chosroes, in order that they could arrange in every detail a treaty for the settlement of the East. [3] But Chosroes sent him away, promising that he would soon be followed by the man who would arrange these matters in a manner advantageous to both sides. [4] Not long afterward he sent *late*
Yazdgushnasp for a second time, a pretentious man full of unspeakable arrogance, *550*
whose pompous puffing and blowing no Roman could bear. [5] He brought with him his wife, daughters, and brother, and was followed by a huge throng of servants. One would have supposed that they were going out for battle. [6] In his company also were two of the most notable men among the Persians, who actually wore golden diadems on their heads. [7] It irritated the people of Byzantion that the emperor Justinian did not receive him simply as an ambassador, but deemed him worthy of much more friendly attention and magnificence. [8] But Bradoukios did not come with him to Byzantion again, for they say that Chosroes had killed him, laying no other charge against him than that he had dined with the emperor of the Romans. [9] "For," he said, "he would not have achieved such an extraordinary honor from the emperor as a mere interpreter, unless he had betrayed the cause of the Persians." But some say that Yazdgushnasp had slandered him, asserting that he had spoken secretly with the Romans. [10] Now when this ambassador met the emperor for the first time, he spoke no word either small or great about peace, but he made the charge that the Romans had violated the truce, alleging that al-Harith and the Saracens who were allies of the Romans had harmed al-Mundhir in a time of peace, and leveling other trivial charges which it has not seemed to me necessary to mention.

783. 1.11.4.

551 [11] While these negotiations were going on in Byzantion, Bessas with the whole Roman army besieged Petra. First the Romans dug a trench along the wall just where Dagisthaios had made his ditch when he pulled the wall down there. I will now explain why they dug in the same place. [12] Those who built this city originally placed the foundations of the circuit-wall for the most part upon rock, but here and there they happened to rest upon earth. [13] There was part of the wall on the west side of the city, a short stretch, on either side of which they had built the foundations of the circuit-wall upon hard, unyielding rock. [14] This was the part that Dagisthaios had undermined previously and now Bessas too: the nature of the ground did not permit them to go farther, but naturally set the length of the trench for them and defined it. [15] When the Persians, after Dagisthaios' withdrawal, wished to rebuild this part of the wall that had fallen down, they did not follow the previous plan in its construction, but they did as follows. [16] Filling the excavated space with gravel, they laid upon it heavy timbers that they had planed thoroughly, making them entirely smooth, and then they bound them together over a wide space; these, then, they used as a base instead of foundation stones, and upon them they skillfully built the circuit-wall. This was not understood by the Romans and they thought they were making their ditch under the foundations. [17] But by excavating the entire space under the timbers that I have just mentioned, and by carrying their work across most of the ground, they did succeed in shaking the wall seriously, and part of it actually dropped down suddenly, but still this fallen part did not lean at all to either side nor was any one of its courses of stone broken; rather, the whole section descended intact in a direct line, as if let down by a machine, into the excavated space and stopped there, keeping its proper position, albeit not to the same height as before, but somewhat less. [18] So when the whole space under the timbers had been excavated, the latter settled into it with the entire wall on them. [19] But even so the wall did not become accessible to the Romans. For when Mihr-Mihroe had come there with his great host of Persians, they had added a great deal to the earlier masonry and so built the circuit-wall extremely high. [20] When the Romans saw the part of the wall that had been shaken down still standing, they were at a loss and in great perplexity. [21] For neither could they mine any longer, seeing as their digging had brought such a result, nor were they able to use the ram, for they were fighting against a wall on a slope, and this engine cannot be brought up to a wall except on smooth and very flat ground.

[22] By some chance there happened to be in this Roman army a small number of the barbarians called Sabeiroi, for the following reason. [23] The Sabeiroi are a Hunnic nation and live by the Caucasus mountains; they are a numerous people and so divided among many different rulers. [24] Some of these rulers from ancient times side with the emperor of the Romans, while others side with the king of the Persians. Each of these two kings were accustomed to pay a fixed amount of gold to the Sabeiroi allied with him, but not annually, only when need forced him to do so. [25] At that time, then, the emperor Justinian invited the Sabeiroi who were friendly to him to an alliance, and sent a man who was to take the money to them. [26] But he, seeing that, with enemies in between, he could not travel safely into the Caucasus region, particularly when carrying

money, went only as far as Bessas and the Roman army that was engaged in besieging Petra, and from there he sent to the Sabeiroi, urging them to send some men quickly who were to receive the money. Thereupon the Sabeiroi selected three of their leading men and immediately sent them with a small escort into Lazike. These, then, were the men who, upon arriving there, had joined the attack on the wall with the Roman army. [27] Now when these Sabeiroi saw that the Romans were in despair and at a loss how to handle the situation, they devised a contrivance such as had never been conceived by anyone of the Romans or Persians since men have existed, although there have always been and still are great numbers of engineers in both states. [28] Although both sides have often been in need of this device throughout their history, in storming the walls of forts situated on rough and difficult ground, not one of them has had the idea that now occurred to these barbarians. It is in this way that, as time goes by, human ingenuity always keeps pace with it by discovering new devices. [29] These Sabeiroi improvised a ram, not in the customary form, but using a new method of their own innovation. [30] They did not put beams into this engine, either upright or transverse, but they bound together some thick rods and fitted them in place everywhere instead of the beams; then they covered the entire engine with hides and so kept the shape of a ram, and hung a single beam by loose chains, as is customary, in the center of the engine. Its head was made sharp and covered over with iron like the barb of a missile, as it was intended to deal repeated blows to the circuit-wall. [31] They made the engine so light that it no longer had to be dragged or pushed along by the men inside, but forty men, who were also going to draw back the beam and thrust it forward against the wall, being inside the engine and concealed by the hides, could carry the ram upon their shoulders with no difficulty. [32] These barbarians made three such engines, taking the beams with their iron heads from the rams that the Romans had in readiness but were unable to draw up to the wall. Roman soldiers chosen for their valor in groups of not less than forty went inside each one of them and set them down by the wall. [33] Others were standing on either side of each engine, armored with their heads carefully covered by helmets, and carrying poles, the ends of which were fitted with hook-shaped irons. The purpose for which these had been provided was this, that as soon as the impact of the ram on the wall broke up the courses of the stones, they might be able with these poles to loosen and pull down the stones that were dislodged. [34] So the Romans set to work and the wall was already being shaken by frequent blows, while those who were on both sides of the engines, using their hooked poles, were pulling down the stones as they were dislodged from their setting in the masonry, and it seemed certain that the city would be captured instantly. [35] But the Persians hit on the following plan. They placed on the top of the circuit-wall a wooden tower that they had prepared long before, filling it with their most warlike men, who had their heads and the rest of their bodies protected by iron spikes and breastplates. [36] They had filled pots with sulfur and bitumen and the chemical substance that the Persians call naphtha and the Greeks "Medeia's oil," and they now set fire to them and began to throw them upon the ram-sheds, and they came close to burning them all. [37] But the men standing next to them, as I have said,

used the poles that I have just mentioned and kept removing these projectiles with the greatest determination and clearing them off, so that they hurled everything down to the ground from the engines as soon as it fell. [38] But they could not expect to hold out long in this work; for the fire kindled instantly whatever it touched, unless it was immediately thrown off. Such then was the course of events here.

[39] But Bessas, who was himself in armor and had armed his whole army, brought many ladders forward to the sunken part of the wall. [40] After encouraging them with a speech—short, so as not to blunt the edge of opportunity—he devoted the remainder of his exhortation to action. For though he was a man of more than seventy years and already well past his prime, he was the first to climb the ladder. [41] There a battle took place and a display of valor by both Romans and Persians such as I at least believe has never once been seen in these times. [42] While the number of the barbarians amounted to twenty-three hundred, the Romans were as many as six thousand. [43] Practically all those on both sides who were not killed received wounds, and extremely few survived with their bodies intact. The Romans were struggling with all their might to force the ascent, while the Persians were beating them back with great vigor. [44] Many were being slain on both sides and the Persians were not far from repelling the danger. For at the tops of the ladders a violent struggle for position took place, and many of the Romans, fighting as they were with an enemy above them, were being slain, and Bessas the general also fell to the ground and lay there. [45] At that point a tremendous shout arose from both armies as the barbarians rushed together from all sides and shot at him, while his bodyguards gathered hastily about him, all of them with helmets on their heads and wearing breastplates; and by holding their shields close together over their heads and crowding in so as to touch each other, they made a sort of roof over him and concealed their general in complete safety, and kept fending off the missiles with all their strength. [46] A great din arose from the missiles that were being thrown continually and blunted on the shields and other armor, and at the same time each man was shouting and panting and exerting himself to the utmost. [47] Meanwhile all the Romans, in their eagerness to defend their general, were shooting at the wall, stopping not for an instant, seeking thus to check the enemy. [48] In this crisis Bessas distinguished himself: though he could not get on his feet because his armor impeded him and also because his body was not nimble (for this man was fleshy and, as I said, very old), still he did not fall into helpless despair, even when he had come into such great danger, but formed a plan on the spur of the moment by which he succeeded in saving both himself and the Roman cause. [49] For he directed his bodyguards to drag him by the foot and thus pull him far from the wall, and they carried out this order. [50] So while some were dragging him, others were retreating with him, holding their shields above him and toward each other, and walking at the same speed as he was being dragged, so that he would not become uncovered and hit by the enemy. [51] Then as soon as Bessas had reached safety, he got on his feet and, urging his men forward, went toward the wall and, setting foot on the ladder once more, made haste to climb it. [52] All the Romans following behind him made a display of real heroism against the enemy.

Then the Persians became terrified and begged their opponents to give them some time, in order to pack up and depart when they handed over the city. [53] But Bessas suspected that they had contrived some trick to strengthen the circuit-wall in the interval, and so he said that he was unable to put a stop to the fighting, but those who wished to meet him to discuss terms could, while the armies were fighting, go with him to another part of the wall; and he designated a certain spot to them. [54] This proposal, however, was not accepted by them, and once more fierce fighting commenced, with much jostling. But while the conflict was still indecisive, it happened that the wall at another point, where the Romans had previously undermined it, suddenly collapsed. Many from both sides rushed together at that spot. [55] Now the Romans were greatly superior to the enemy in numbers, although they were divided into two parts, and they kept pressing the battle against their opponents, shooting faster than ever and pushing forward with the greatest force. [56] The Persians, on the other hand, no longer resisted with the same strength as before, assailed violently as they were at both points, and the smallness of their numbers divided between two fronts was conspicuous. [57] While both the armies were still struggling, with the Persians unable to repulse their enemy as they pressed upon them and the Romans unable to force a final entrance, a young man, an Armenian named Ioannes, the son of Thomas whom they called Gouzes, left the collapsed part of the circuit-wall and the struggles there, and, taking with him a few of his Armenian followers, ascended by the precipice, where all considered the city to be impregnable, having overpowered the guards at that point. [58] Then, after getting on the parapet, he killed with his spear one of the Persian defenders there, who appeared to be the most warlike. In this manner the Romans entered.

[59] The Persians who were posted in the wooden tower had kindled a huge number of fire-bearing pots in order to burn up the engines, men and all, by the very number of their projectiles, as the defenders were unable to push them all aside with their poles. [60] But suddenly there sprang up from the south a wind of extraordinary violence that blew against them with a great roar, and somehow it set fire to one of the planks of the tower. [61] The Persians there did not immediately realize this, for they were all working and shouting extremely loudly, being filled with fear and in the midst of wild confusion, and the urgency of the moment had robbed them of their senses; so the flame rising little by little, fed by the oil named after Medeia and all the other things with which the tower was supplied, burned up the whole tower and the Persians who were in it. [62] They were all burned to death and their charred bodies fell, some inside the wall, others outside where the engines stood with the Romans about them. Then the other Romans also who were fighting at the fallen part of the wall, as the enemy were giving way before them in utter despair, got inside the fortifications, and Petra was captured completely. [63] About 500 of the Persians ran up to the acropolis and, seizing the stronghold there, remained quiet, but the Romans made prisoners of all the others, those whom they had not killed in the fighting, amounting to about 730. [64] Among these they found only eighteen unhurt, all the rest having been wounded. There fell too many of the best of the Romans, and among them Ioannes, the son of Thomas, who,

while entering the city, was hit on the head by a stone thrown by one of the barbarians, but after that he made a display of marvelous deeds against the enemy.

12. On the following day the Romans, while besieging those barbarians who had seized the acropolis, made a proposal, offering them personal safety and promising to give them pledges to that effect, thinking that the Persians would surrender on this basis. [2] But they did not accept the terms and prepared to resist, not expecting that they would hold out long in their desperate situation, but at least they would die a heroic death. [3] Yet Bessas, wishing to dissuade them from this purpose and make them hope for safety, commanded one of the Roman soldiers to go up as close as he could to them and exhort the men, and he stated what he wished him to say to them. [4] This man then came up close to the fortress and spoke as follows:

Bessas to the Persians in Petra

Most noble Persians, what has come over you that you are clinging to destruction, courting death with such an irrational passion and conspicuously dishonoring your valiant deeds? For it is not a manly thing to resist the inevitable nor wise to refuse to submit to those who have won; nor, on the other hand, is it inglorious to live by accepting the situation that chance has brought. [5] The charge of dishonor is justly refuted by any necessity that offers no hope of rescue, even if it involves the most shameful actions; for evil, when it is unavoidable, is naturally followed by forgiveness. [6] Do not, therefore, emulate madmen in the midst of predictable danger, and do not give your safety away in exchange for arrogance, but rather call to mind that it is impossible for the dead to come to life, while the living can destroy themselves at a later time, if indeed that seems best. [7] So make your final deliberation and consider well your interests, knowing that those decisions are best that can still be reversed by those who have made them. [8] For we on our part pity you even though you are fighting against your own friends, and spare you though you are courting death, and we expect, as is customary for Christian Romans, to feel compassion for you though you throw life to the winds, and look upon it as a trivial matter. [9] The difference for you will be simply this, that by shifting your allegiance for the better you will have Justinian instead of Chosroes as master, and we agree to give you pledges to make this binding. [10] Do not kill yourselves when it is possible to be saved. It is not a good thing to linger fondly in danger for no advantage whatsoever, as this is not playing the part of brave men but simply courting death. [11] He is noble who steels himself to endure the most severe fate when he can anticipate from it some benefit. For men do not applaud voluntary death when even the surrounding danger offers hope for better things, but a useless destruction of life is rash folly, and senseless daring that leads to death under a pretense of being dynamic merits no praise, at least in the judgment of thinking men. [12] Furthermore, you are bound also to take into consideration that you may seem to be showing some ingratitude toward God, for if he wished to destroy you, my men, he would not, I think, have put you into the hands of those who are striving to preserve vou. [13] That is our position. Now you must decide what you think should happen to you.

[14] Such was the exhortation. The Persians, however, were unwilling even to hear these words, but shut their ears and pretended not to understand. [15] Then, at the command of the general, the Romans hurled fire into the acropolis, thinking that in this way the enemy would surrender themselves. [16] As the flames spread and grew, the barbarians, with disaster before their eyes and knowing well that they would quickly be burned to ashes, and having no hope nor seeing any possibility of saving themselves by fighting, still they did not want to fall into the power of their enemy and were burned to death, all of them together with the acropolis, while the Roman army were amazed at what was taking place. [17] It then became clear how much value Chosroes placed upon Lazike, for he had chosen the most notable of all his soldiers, assigned them to garrison Petra, and deposited there such an abundance of weapons that when the Romans took possession of them as plunder, five men's equipment fell to each soldier, in spite of the fact that many weapons had been burned on the acropolis. [18] There was found also a vast quantity of grain, cured meat, and other provisions, which were indeed sufficient to keep all the besieged adequately supplied for five years. [19] The Persians had not, as it happened, stored wine there other than the sour variety, along with an ample supply of beans. [20] But when the Romans did find water there flowing from the aqueduct, they were astonished and perplexed, until they learned the whole truth about the concealed pipes. I will now explain what these were.

[21] When Chosroes established the garrison in Petra after capturing it, knowing well that the Romans would attack it with every means in their power and would immediately attempt without a moment's hesitation to cut the aqueduct, he contrived the following plan. [22] He divided the water being conveyed into the city into three parts and had a very deep trench dug, in which he constructed three pipelines, one lying at the very bottom of this trench, and this he covered with mud and stones up to the middle of the trench; at that level he concealed the second pipeline, and above it built the third, which was above ground and visible to all; so the piping was on three levels, but this fact was concealed. [23] At the beginning of the siege the Romans did not understand this and so, after they had cut this obvious pipeline, they did not push forward their work on the trench, but gave up the labor before the next pipeline was destroyed, thinking that the besieged would now be in want of water, their minds being deceived by their own careless methods. [24] But as the siege was prolonged, the Romans by capturing some of the enemy learned that the besieged were drawing water from the aqueduct. [25] Accordingly they dug down into the ground and found there the second pipeline, which they cut immediately, and they thought that they had thus crippled the enemy completely, not having learned even the second time from the lesson before them the real meaning of their previous experience. [26] But when they had captured the city and saw, as I have said, the water flowing in from the pipe, they began to marvel and were greatly perplexed. [27] Hearing from their captives what had been done, they came to realize, after the fact, the care shown by the enemy in their preparation and the futility of their own lazy efforts. [28] Bessas now immediately sent all the prisoners to the emperor and razed the circuit-wall of Petra to the ground so that the enemy could not again make trouble for them.

[29] The emperor praised him particularly for the valor he had demonstrated and for his wisdom in tearing down the whole wall. [30] Thus Bessas was once more admired among all men, both because of his good fortune and also the valor he had displayed. [31] For previously, when he was appointed to command the garrison of Rome, the Romans had great hopes of him, as before that time he had consistently shown himself to be brave. [32] But when it came about that he met with bad fortune there, given that Rome was captured by the Goths, as I recounted in a previous book,[784] and the Roman people were in large part destroyed, even so when he returned after this to Byzantion the emperor Justinian appointed him general against the Persians. [33] Practically everyone bitterly criticized this act and scoffed at the emperor's decision, to entrust the Mede War to this Bessas, who had one foot in the grave, and after he had been defeated decisively by the Goths and was in his sunset years. [34] This was the feeling of practically all men, but it actually fell out that this general met with the good fortune and displayed the valor that I have described.[785] Thus it is that human affairs proceed not according to the judgments of men, but are subject to the inclination of God, which men tend to call Chance, knowing not why in the world events happen in the way that they manifest themselves to them. [35] For the name of Chance tends to be attached to that which appears to be contrary to reason. But as regards this matter, let each man think as he wishes.

13. Now Mihr-Mihroe, fearing that over time something bad might happen to Petra and the Persians left there, had set his whole army in motion and marched in that direction,
551 and he was further influenced to do so by the season, as it was now past winter. [2] But during the journey he learned all that had happened and abandoned his march entirely, knowing well that the Lazoi had no fortress beyond the Phasis river except only the one at Petra. [3] He then returned and seized the passes from Iberia into the land of Kolchis, where the Phasis can be forded, and he crossed this river on foot and also another river of no less difficulty, named the Reon, which is likewise not navigable there. Getting on the right of the Phasis, he led his army against a city named Archaiopolis, which is the first and greatest city in Lazike. [4] Apart from a few men, his army was all cavalry, and they had with them eight elephants, upon which the Persians were to stand and shoot down on the heads of their enemy just as from towers. [5] Indeed one might be led with good reason to marvel at how assiduously and resourcefully the Persians wage war; for it was they who took the road leading from Iberia into Kolchis, which was everywhere impeded by precipitous ravines and difficult ground covered with brush, and concealed by forests of wide-spreading trees, so that even for an unencumbered traveler the way had seemed impassable previously, and they made it so smooth that not only did their entire cavalry pass that way with no difficulty, but they also actually marched over that road taking with them as many of their elephants as they wished. [6] Huns also came

784. 7.20.

785. But see 8.13.13–14 for devastating criticism of this general and Justinian's appointments in general.

to them as allies from the nation of the Sabeiroi, to the number of twelve thousand. [7] But Mihr-Mihroe feared that these barbarians, who were so many, might be unwilling to obey his commands and would actually do some terrible harm to the Persian army, and so he permitted only four thousand to march with him, sending all the rest back to their homes after making them a generous present of money. [8] The Roman army numbered twelve thousand; they were not, however, all mustered in one place: there were three thousand in the garrison at Archaiopolis under the command of Odonachos and Babas, both able warriors, [9] while all the rest were waiting in camp on the other side of the Phasis river. Their plan was that, if the enemy army made an attack at any point, they themselves would move out from there and go to the rescue in full force. These were commanded by Venilos and Uligag; [10] Varazes the Persarmenian was also with them, having recently returned from Italy, and he had eight hundred Tzanoi under his command. [11] As for Bessas, as soon as he had captured Petra, he was unwilling to continue the struggle, but withdrew to the Pontians and Armenians and was paying the closest possible attention to the revenues from his territory. By this miserly policy he again wrecked the cause of the Romans. [12] For if, immediately after that victory that I have described and his capture of Petra, he had gone to the borders of Lazike and Iberia and barricaded the passes there, it seems to me that a Persian army would never again have entered Lazike. [13] But in fact this general, by lazily overlooking this task, all but surrendered Lazike to the enemy with his own hand, disregarding the possibility of imperial anger. [14] For the emperor Justinian was accustomed to mostly condone the misdeeds of his commanders, and consequently they generally behaved criminally both in private life and toward the republic.

[15] The Lazoi had two fortresses almost exactly on the boundary of Iberia,[786] Skanda and Sarapanis. They were extraordinarily hard of access as they were situated in very rugged and difficult country. [16] They used to be garrisoned by the Lazoi in ancient times with great difficulty, for no food at all grows there and supplies had to be brought in by men who carried them on their shoulders. [17] But the emperor Justinian at the start of this war had removed the Lazoi from these fortresses and substituted a garrison of Roman soldiers. [18] These soldiers, then, not long afterward, being hard-pressed by the lack of necessary supplies, abandoned these fortresses because they were unable to live for any considerable time on millet, as the Kolchians did, for it was not familiar to them, and the Lazoi no longer kept up the effort to travel the long journey to bring them all their supplies. [19] The Persians occupied and held them then, but in the treaty the Romans got them back in exchange for the fortress of Bolon and Pharangion, as I told in detail in a preceding book.[787] [20] The Lazoi then razed these fortresses to the ground, in order that the Persians might not hold them as outposts against them. But the Persians rebuilt and held one of the two which they call Skanda, and Mihr-Mihroe led the army of the Medes forward.

786. Cf. 1.12.15.

787. 1.22.18.

[21] There had been a city in the plain called Rodopolis, which those who were invading Kolchis from Iberia met first, and it was so situated as to be easily accessible and altogether open to attack. [22] For this reason the Lazoi had long before, in fear of a Persian invasion, razed it to the ground. When the Persians learned this, they moved straight for Archaiopolis. [23] But Mihr-Mihroe learned that his enemy was encamped near the mouth of the Phasis river, and he advanced on them. [24] For it seemed to him better first to capture this force and then to undertake the siege of Archaiopolis, in order that they not come from the rear and harm the Persian army. [25] He went close by the fortifications of Archaiopolis and gave a mocking salute to the Romans there, and with something of a swagger said that he would be right back. [26] For, said he, he wished to greet the other Romans first who were encamped by the Phasis river. [27] The Romans, by way of answer, told him to go wherever he wished, but they declared that if he came upon the Romans there he would never return to them. [28] When the commanders of the Roman army learned this, they were thoroughly frightened and, thinking that they were too few to withstand the force of their assailants, embarked on the boats that they had ready and ferried their entire force across the Phasis river, placing their supplies on the boats, as much as they were able to carry, throwing the rest into the river so that the enemy would not benefit from them. [29] So when Mihr-Mihroe arrived there with his whole army not long afterward, and saw the enemy's camp entirely abandoned, he was angry and filled with resentment at the baffling situation. [30] He burned the Roman stockade and, boiling with fury, turned back immediately and led his army against Archaiopolis.

14. The city of Archaiopolis is situated on an extremely rugged hill, and a river flows by it, coming down from the mountains that are above the city. [2] It has two gates, one of which is below, opening on the base of the hill, and this one is not inaccessible except insofar as the ascent to it from the plain is not smooth; but the upper gate leads out to the steep slope and is extremely difficult to approach, for the ground before this gate is covered with brush that extends to an indefinite distance. [3] As the inhabitants of this city can get no other water, those who built it constructed two walls that extend from the city all the way to the river, to make it possible for them to draw water from it in safety. Mihr-Mihroe, consequently, being eager and determined to assault the wall there with his whole strength, did as follows. [4] He first commanded the Sabeiroi to build a great number of rams, of the sort that men would be able to carry on their shoulders, because he was unable to bring up the usual engines to the walls of Archaiopolis, lying as it did along the lower slopes of a mountain; for he had heard what had been achieved by the Sabeiroi who were allies of the Romans at the wall of Petra not long before, and he sought by following the method discovered by them to reap the advantage of their experience. [5] They carried out his orders, constructing immediately a large number of rams, such as I have said were recently made for the Romans by the Sabeiroi.[788] Next

788. 8.11.29–33.

he sent the Daylami, as they are called, against the steep parts of the city, ordering them to harass the enemy there with all their strength. [6] These Daylami are barbarians who live in the middle of Persia, but have never been subject to the king of the Persians.[789] [7] For they inhabit sheer mountain-sides that are altogether inaccessible, and so they have lived autonomously from ancient times down to the present; but they always march with the Persians as mercenaries when they go against their enemies. [8] They are all foot soldiers, each man carrying a sword and shield and three javelins in his hand. [9] They know how to run fast over cliffs and mountain peaks, just as on a level plain. [10] For this reason Mihr-Mihroe assigned them to attack the wall there, while he with the rest of the army went against the lower gate, bringing up the rams and the elephants. [11] So then the Persians and Sabeiroi together, by shooting rapidly at the wall so that they filled the air around it with their arrows, came close to forcing the Romans there to abandon the parapet. [12] The Daylami, hurling their javelins in from the crags outside the walls, were inflicting even more harm upon the enemy facing them. [13] On every side, indeed, the situation of the Romans had become bad and full of danger, and they were suffering unimaginable harm.

[14] At that point Odonachos and Babas, either to make a display of valor or wanting to test the soldiers, or it may even be that some divine influence moved them, left only a few of the soldiers where they were, directing them to defend against the assailants of the wall from the parapet, and meanwhile called together the greater part of them and made a short exhortation, speaking as follows:

Odonachos and Babas to their men

> Fellow soldiers, you see the danger we are in and the necessity gripping us. [15] We must not yield in the least to these evils. For one thing only can save those who have come to despair of salvation, namely not to cling to safety; for a fondness for life tends in most cases to be followed by destruction. [16] You must consider this fact also in our present difficulty, that by simply defending against the enemy from this parapet your safety will by no means be guaranteed, even though we carry forward the struggle with the greatest zeal. [17] For a battle waged between armies standing apart gives no one opportunity to show himself a brave man, but the issue is generally determined by chance. [18] But if the conflict becomes a hand-to-hand struggle, enthusiasm will in most cases prevail and victory will side with valor. [19] Apart from this, even if they succeed in battle, men fighting from the wall reap no great benefit from this success because, while they have for the moment repulsed the enemy, the danger will peak again on the next day, but if they fail even by a little, they are naturally destroyed along with their defenses. [20] Yet if they conquer their opponents in hand-to-hand combat they will thereafter have their safety assured. With these thoughts in mind, let us now advance against the enemy with all zeal, calling on help from above to our aid and with our hopes raised high by the desperate situation that has now fallen to us. [21] For God always saves those men who find no hope of safety in themselves.

789. The Daylami (Dolomitai, Dilimnitai) lived in the Elburz mountains south of the Caspian Sea. For their tactics, see also Agathias, *Histories* 3.17.7–9.

[22] After this exhortation, Odonachos and Babas opened the gates and led the army out on the run, leaving a few men behind for the following reason. [23] One of the Lazoi, who was a man of note in this nation and an inhabitant of Archaiopolis, had on the previous day negotiated with Mihr-Mihroe to betray his native city. [24] Mihr-Mihroe had sent word to him to do the Persians only this service, that, whenever they began the assault on the wall, he should secretly set fire to the buildings where the grain and the rest of the provisions were stored. [25] He directed him to do this, reasoning that one of two things would happen, either that the Romans would be concerned about this fire and devote their attention to it, thus giving his men the chance to scale the circuit-wall undisturbed; or that in their eagerness to repulse the Persians storming the wall they would pay no attention to these buildings, [26] and if in this way the grain and other provisions were burned, he would with no difficulty capture Archaiopolis in a short time. [27] With such a purpose did Mihr-Mihroe give these instructions to this Laz, and he, for his part, agreed to carry out the order when he saw the storming of the wall at its height, by setting fire as secretly as possible to these buildings. [28] When the Romans saw the flames rising suddenly, a few of them went to the rescue and with great effort quenched the fire, which had done some damage, but all the rest, as stated, went out against the enemy. [29] This force, by falling upon them suddenly and terrifying them by the unexpectedness of their attack, slew many, for the Persians offered no resistance and did not even dare raise a hand against them. [30] This was because the Persians had no expectation that their enemy, who were few, would make a sally against them, and so they had taken up positions apart from one another with a view to storming the wall and were not in battle array. [31] Those who were carrying the rams on their shoulders were naturally both unarmed and unprepared for battle, while the others, with only strung bows in their hands, were entirely unable to defend against an enemy pressing upon them in close array. [32] Thus the Romans, slashing and turning from side to side, were cutting them down. At that moment also it so happened that one of the elephants, because he was wounded, some say, or simply because he became excited, wheeled around out of control and reared up, throwing his riders and breaking up the ranks of the others. [33] As a result the barbarians began to retreat, while the Romans continued without fear to destroy those who fell in their way. [34] One might wonder at this point that the Romans, although knowing well how to repel an attack by elephants, did none of what is required by that, being obviously confused by the situation, and yet this result was achieved without effort on their part. I will now make clear what this is.

[35] When Chosroes and the army of the Medes were attacking the walls of Edessa,[790] one of the elephants, mounted by many of the most warlike Persians, came up to the circuit-wall and seemed to be on the verge of overpowering the men defending the tower at that point, as they were exposed to missiles falling thickly from above, and was about to take the city. [36] For it seemed that this was, in fact, an engine for the capture

790. I.e., in 544; see 2.26–27.

of cities. But the Romans, by dangling a pig from the tower, escaped this peril. [37] As the pig was hanging there, he naturally squealed and this so irritated the elephant that he got out of control and, stepping back little by little, withdrew. Such was the outcome of that situation. [38] But in this case the omission due to the Romans' carelessness was made good by chance. Now that I have mentioned Edessa, I will not be silent as to the portent that appeared there before this present war. [39] When Chosroes was about to break the so-called Endless Peace, a certain woman in the city gave birth to an infant that in other respects was a normally formed human being, except that it had two heads. The meaning of this was made clear by the events that followed, [40] for both Edessa and practically the whole East and the greater part of the Roman empire to [the north][791] was contested by two kings. Thus did these things happen. I return to the point from which I digressed.

[41] When confusion thus fell upon the army of the Medes, those stationed in back, seeing the confusion of those in front of them but having no real knowledge of what had happened, became panic-stricken and turned to retreat in great disorder. [42] The Daylami also experienced this (for they were fighting from the higher positions and could see all that was happening), and they too began to flee in a disgraceful manner, so the rout became decisive. [43] Four thousand of the barbarians fell there, among whom, as it happened, were three of the commanders, and the Romans captured four of the Persian standards, which they immediately sent to Byzantion and the emperor. [44] They say, moreover, that not fewer than twenty thousand of their horses perished, not from wounds inflicted by the enemy's arrows or swords, but because in traveling over a great distance they had become utterly exhausted and then had found insufficient fodder since entering into Lazike; and so, they say, they succumbed under the stress of both starvation and weakness.

[45] Failing thus in this attempt, Mihr-Mihroe withdrew with his whole army to Mocheresis; for, even though they had failed to take Archaiopolis, the Persians still held mastery over most of the rest of Lazike. [46] Mocheresis is one day's journey from Archaiopolis and includes many populous villages. This is really the best land in Kolchis, for both wine and other good things are produced there, although the rest of Lazike, to be sure, is not like that. [47] Along this district flows a river called Reon, by which the Kolchians in ancient times built a fortress, but in later times they themselves razed most of it to the ground because, lying as it did in a very flat plain, it seemed to them easy of access. [48] The fortress was then named Kotiaïon in the Greek language, but now the Lazoi call it Kotaïs,[792] having corrupted the true sound of the name because of their ignorance of the language. Such is the account given by Arrian.[793] [49] But others say that the place was a city in ancient times and was called Koitaion, and that Aietes was born there, as a result of which the poets both called him a Koitaïan and

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791. These words have been added by the editor.

792. Modern Kutaisi.

793. This is not found in the surviving texts by Arrian.

late 551 called the land of Kolchis Koitaïs. [50] Mihr-Mihroe was now eager to rebuild this place but, as he had no equipment for the task, and because winter was already setting in, he replaced with wood, as quickly as possible, the parts of the fortress that had fallen down and stayed there. [51] But close to Koitaïs is a very strong fortress, Outhimereos by name; in this the Lazoi were maintaining strict guard. [52] A small number of Roman soldiers also were sharing with them the defense of the fortress. [53] So Mihr-Mihroe settled there with his whole army, holding the fairest part of the land of Kolchis and preventing his opponents from carrying any provisions into the fortress of Outhimereos or from going into the district of Souania and Skymnia, as it is called, even though this was subject to them. [54] For when an enemy is in Mocheresis, the road into this region is thereby cut off for both Lazoi and Romans. Thus were the armies engaged in Lazike.

15. In Byzantion, meanwhile, Chosroes' envoy Yazdgushnasp wasted a vast amount of time in conferring with the emperor Justinian regarding the peace. [2] It was only after *late 551* protracted debates that they finally reached an agreement that there would be a five-year truce in the realms of both kings while envoys fearlessly passed back and forth from each country to the other, carrying on negotiations for peace during this time until they settled the points of disagreement regarding both Lazike and the Saracens. [3] It was further agreed that the Persians would receive from the Romans for this five-year truce twenty *kentenaria* of gold, and six additional *kentenaria* for the eighteen months that had elapsed between the expiration of the former truce and the time when they had commenced negotiations with each other now. [4] For the Persians declared that they had they permitted negotiations for the treaty to proceed only on this term. [5] Yazdgushnasp further demanded that he receive these twenty *kentenaria* on the spot, but the emperor wished to give four each year, his purpose, of course, being to have surety that Chosroes would not violate the agreement. [6] Later, however, the Romans gave the Persians outright the entire amount of gold agreed upon, so as not to appear to be paying them tribute each year. [7] For it is the disgraceful name, and not the fact, of which men are generally ashamed. [8] Now there was a certain man among the Persians named Bersabous, a man of note and a close friend of king Chosroes. [9] Valerianos had once happened upon this man in a battle in Armenia, and he took him prisoner and immediately sent him to the emperor at Byzantion. [10] A long time passed while he was kept under guard there. Now Chosroes was willing to advance a great amount of money for him, in order to see Bersabous returned to the land of Persia. [11] But now the emperor Justinian released the man at the request of Yazdgushnasp; for this ambassador promised the emperor to persuade Chosroes to remove the Persian army from Lazike. [12] Thus this armistice was arranged by the Romans and Persians in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of the emperor Justinian. [13] Most of the Romans were thoroughly displeased with this treaty, but whether their reproach was in some measure justified or as unreasonable as the complaints of subjects commonly are, I am unable to say.

[14] These objectors kept saying that the treaty had been made while Lazike was most firmly in the power of the Persians, whose intention was to remain there undisturbed

for five years so that during this time they might be able without fear or hardship to occupy the best parts of the land of Kolchis; [15] and the Romans thereafter would be utterly unable to dislodge them from there, and henceforth Byzantion itself would be easily accessible to the Persians from there. Such was the general view, and they were angry and irritated and utterly pessimistic. [16] They were also moved by the fact that the very thing that the Persians had been striving for from ancient times, but which had seemed impossible to achieve either by war or any other means—that is, to have the Romans subject to the payment of tribute to them—this had now been most firmly achieved in the name of an armistice. [17] For Chosroes, by imposing upon the Romans an annual tribute of four *kentenaria*, the very thing he had clearly been bent on from the start, has up to the present time and for a period of eleven years and six months brought in forty-six *kentenaria* on the specious pretext of an armistice,[794] giving to the tribute the name of a treaty, although in the meantime he has, as stated, been carrying on with war and violence in Lazike. [18] The Romans had no hope of ever extricating themselves in the future from this arrangement, but they perceived that they had, in an overt way, become tributaries to the Persians. [19] Thus were these things done. But Yazdgushnasp, possessing money such as no envoy has ever carried and having become, I suppose, the richest of all Persians, departed for home, as the emperor Justinian had honored him in an extraordinary way and presented him with huge sums of money before his dismissal. [20] He alone among all ambassadors did not have the experience of being under guard in any sense, but both he and all his barbarian followers—they were an extremely numerous company—enjoyed complete freedom for a long period of time to meet and associate with whomever they wished, walking about in every part of the city, buying and selling whatever they pleased, carrying on all types of transactions, and devoting themselves with complete freedom to the associated business, just as they would in a city of their own, with not a Roman following or accompanying them at all or bothering to watch them, as is customary.

[21] At this time an event occurred that has never happened before, at least as far as we know. Although it was late autumn in that year, there was a remarkable period *late*
of drought and hot weather as in the middle of summer, so that a great quantity of *551*
roses actually came out as if it were spring, differing in no way from ordinary roses. [22] Practically all the trees brought forth new fruit again, while the clusters likewise appeared on the vines, although the vintage had already been gathered not many days before. [23] From these things those who are clever in such matters foretold that some great and unexpected thing would take place, some that it would be good and others the opposite. [24] But I for my part think that this was the result of a sort of coincidence, as the usual south winds prevailed for a very long period, bringing a great heat upon the land beyond what is customary and not in keeping with the season. [25] But if it really

794. I.e., adding the 20 *kentenaria* at 2.28.10 and the 26 *kentenaria* at 8.15.3. The eleven and a half years refer to the two 5-year periods covered by the two treaties (projecting out to 556) plus the year and a half in between.

does, as they say, indicate that some unexpected event will happen, we will know it most certainly from what is to come.

551 **16.** While negotiations were taking place in Byzantion between the Romans and Persians over the treaty, the following took place in Lazike. [2] Goubazes, the king of the Lazoi, was well disposed toward the Romans, for he perceived that Chosroes was plotting his death, as I have stated in a previous book.[795] [3] But most of the other Lazoi, having suffered outrageous treatment at the hands of the Roman soldiers and being particularly angry with the officers of the army, began to favor the Medes as a general rule, not because they preferred the cause of the Persians but because they wished to be rid of Roman rule and preferred their former difficulties, not their current ones. [4] Now there was a distinguished man among the Lazoi, Theophobios by name, who came into secret negotiations with Mihr-Mihroe and promised to put the fort of Outhimereos into his hands. [5] Mihr-Mihroe filled the man with great hopes and urged him to do this, declaring that as a result of this deed he would not only be a very close friend of king Chosroes, but would also be regarded by the Persians as a benefactor for all time and so would become great in fame, wealth, and power.[796] Theophobios was elated by these promises and even more determined to perform this task. [6] At that time the Romans and Lazoi were not free to mingle but, while the Persians were going about everywhere in that country with complete liberty, some of the Romans and Lazoi were hiding by the Phasis river while others had seized Archaiopolis or some other stronghold there to conceal themselves in. Goubazes himself, the king of the Lazoi, was remaining quietly on the mountain peaks. [7] Consequently Theophobios was able to make good his promise to Mihr-Mihroe with no difficulty. For he went inside the fortress and stated to the Lazoi and Romans who were keeping guard there that the whole Roman army had perished, that the cause of king Goubazes and all the Lazoi with him had been utterly lost, and that all Kolchis was held by the Persians, and there was not a single hope for the Romans or Goubazes ever to win back rule of the land. [8] Formerly, he pointed out, Mihr-Mihroe had accomplished this alone, bringing with him more than seventy thousand fighting Persians and vast numbers of barbarian Sabeiroi; but now, he said, king Chosroes himself had actually come there with numbers beyond counting and had suddenly joined forces with them, so that from now on not even the whole land of the Kolchians would suffice for this army. [9] With this tall tale Theophobios reduced the guards there to a state of terror and helplessness. [10] They begged him with entreaties in the name of their ancestral god to use all his power to turn the present situation to their advantage. [11] He promised them that he would bring from Chosroes pledges for their safety, on condition that they surrender the fortress to the Persians. The men were delighted with these terms and he immediately left from there and went again to Mihr-Mihroe, explaining everything.

795. 2.29.2.

796. Cf. the promises of Xerxes in Thucydides, *History* 1.129.3.

[12] Then Mihr-Mihroe selected the most notable Persians and sent them with him to Outhimereos, for the purpose of arranging pledges for both the money and the lives of the guards of the place and so to take over that fortress. [13] Thus did the Persians gain the fortress of Outhimereos and secure mastery over Lazike most firmly. [14] Not only did the Persians subject this land of Lazike, but also Skymnia and Souania, and so the whole territory from Mocheresis as far as Iberia became closed to the Romans and the king of the Lazoi. [15] Neither the Romans nor the Lazoi were able to fight off the enemy, for they did not even dare to come down from the mountains or their strongholds, nor to make any advances against the enemy.

[16] As the winter season came on, Mihr-Mihroe built a wooden wall at Kotaïs and established there a guard of warlike Persians no less than three thousand strong, and he also left a sufficient force of men in Outhimereos. [17] He also built up the other fortress of the Lazoi which they call Sarapanis, situated at the very limit of the territory of Lazike, and remained there. [18] But later, upon learning that the Romans and Lazoi were gathering and making camp at the mouth of the Phasis river, he moved against them with his whole army. [19] When Goubazes and the commanders of the Roman army learned this, they refused to withstand the enemy's attack and dispersed, saving themselves as each found it possible. [20] As for Goubazes, he ran up to the mountain peaks and proceeded to pass the winter there along with his wife and children and his closest associates, putting up with the rigors of winter because of the hopelessness of his evil situation, but confident of the future because of his hope in Byzantion, and in this way finding consolation for his present fortune, as men tend to do, and hoping for better days. [21] The rest of the Lazoi too, ashamed to be outdone by king Goubazes, were passing the winter among the crags, fearing no danger from the enemy there, for these mountains are at all times impracticable and wholly inaccessible for an attacking force, and particularly during the winter, but they were also enduring mortal suffering through hunger, cold, and other hardships. [22] Meanwhile Mihr-Mihroe built many houses at his leisure in the villages throughout Mocheresis and established stores of supplies everywhere among these places; then, by sending some of the deserters to the mountain heights and offering pledges he succeeded in winning over many. They were naturally lacking provisions, and he supplied them generously and cared for them as his own. Indeed, he carried on the whole administration with complete security, as if he had become lord of the land. [23] And he wrote the following letter to Goubazes:

Mihr-Mihroe to Goubazes

> There are two things that regulate the lives of men, power and wisdom. Those who are more powerful than their neighbors live according to their own desire and also lead where they wish those who are less powerful than themselves, while the others, although enslaved to the strong because of their weakness, can still remedy their impotence by wisdom and, by courting the powerful with flattery, are still able to live with their own possessions, enjoying by means of flattery everything of which they are deprived by weakness. [24] This is the case not only for some nations, it being different for others, but one can say that this is innate to human experience in every part of the inhabited world like any other natural

> characteristic. [25] My dear Goubazes, if you think you are going to defeat the Persians in the war, then neither hesitate nor let anything stand in your way. [26] You will find us in any part of Lazike you may choose ready to meet your attack and prepared in battle array to fight for this land with all our might; so that in waging a decisive battle, you have the opportunity to show your valor against us. [27] If, however, even you realize that you are unable to pit yourself against the might of the Persians, then, good sir, you should opt for the second alternative and "know yourself": bow down before your master Chosroes as king and victor and lord. [28] Beg that he be merciful to you in spite of your acts, in order that you may be able henceforth to escape the evils that afflict you. [29] For I personally promise that king Chosroes will be merciful to you and will give pledges, furnishing you as hostages sons of the notable lords in Persia, so that you will have safety, your kingdom, and everything else in security for all time. [30] But if you want neither of these alternatives, then at least go off to some other land and allow the Lazoi, who have been reduced to wretchedness by your foolishness, to breathe again and recover from the difficulties that press upon them. Do not wish to inflict upon them this unending destruction, being moved by a deceptive hope, by which I mean assistance from the Romans. [31] For they will never be able to defend you, just as they have not been able up to the present day.

Thus wrote Mihr-Mihroe. [32] But even so he did not persuade Goubazes, who remained among the mountain peaks, awaiting assistance from the Romans and, by reason of his hostility to Chosroes, absolutely unwilling to despair of the Romans. [33] For men in general adapt their decisions to the interests of their desire, and while, on the one hand, they incline toward the argument that pleases them and accept all its consequences, not investigating to see whether it may be false, on the other hand they are outraged by the one that annoys them and distrust it, not searching to see whether it may be true.

17. At this time some monks arrived from India, and when they learned that the emperor Justinian was eager to find a way so that the Romans no longer had to buy silk from the Persians, they came before the emperor and declared that they could arrange it so that the Romans would no longer have to purchase this item from their enemy the Persians, or indeed from any other people.[797] [2] For they had spent much time in a land situated far to the north of the nations of India which is called Serinde, and there they had learned exactly by what process silk could be produced in Roman lands too. [3] The emperor questioned them in detail and sought to discover whether this was true. The monks then explained that the makers of silk were certain worms that knew how to do this by their nature, which compelled them to produce it continually. [4]

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797. This first meeting of the monks and Justinian must have happened long before the time of the other events being recounted (late 551), because they subsequently traveled to China (Serinde) to obtain the silk worms. Probably in the late 540s, Justinian had imposed imperial control on the trade of silk within the empire (*Secret History* 25.13–26). The material was obtained from Persian middlemen then dyed in Roman workshops.

While it would be impossible to bring these worms here alive, it could be done easily with their offspring, which consisted of countless eggs. [5] Men cover these eggs with dung long after they are laid and, by heating them so for a sufficient time, they hatch the animal itself. [6] When they said this, the emperor promised to give the men great gifts and persuaded them to prove their words through action. [7] So they went back to Serinde and brought the eggs to Byzantion,[798] where they transformed them into worms in the manner just described, feeding them on mulberry leaves. From that time onward silk has been produced in the lands of the Romans. [8] So that was how affairs stood between the Romans and the Persians regarding both the war and silk.

552 [9] After the winter season Yazdgushnasp came to Chosroes with the money and announced the terms agreed upon by them. Upon receiving the money, Chosroes confirmed the armistice without any hesitation, but he was unwilling to relinquish Lazike. [10] In fact, he actually used this money to purchase an alliance of a vast horde of the Sabeiroi Huns, and he sent them immediately with some Persians to Mihr-Mihroe, whom he directed to pursue his task with all the power at his disposal; and he sent him also a large number of elephants. [11] Mihr-Mihroe, then, departed from Mocheresis with the whole army of Persians and Huns and moved against the strongholds of the Lazoi, taking the elephants. [12] The Romans, however, offered no resistance, but under the leadership of Martinos they made themselves as secure as possible in a naturally strong position near the mouth of the Phasis river, and remained there quietly. [13] Goubazes, the king of the Lazoi, was with them. But this Mede army, because of a certain chance occurrence, did no harm to anyone either of the Romans or the Lazoi. [14] For in the first place Mihr-Mihroe, learning that the sister of Goubazes was in a certain fortress, led his army against this with the intention of capturing it by any means. [15] But because the guards of that place offered a most valiant resistance and also because the naturally strong position was in their favor, the barbarians were repulsed from the town without accomplishing their purpose and withdrew. Then they hastened against the Abasgoi. [16] But the Romans keeping guard in Tzibile seized the pass, which was very narrow and precipitous, as I have stated,[799] and quite impossible to force, and thus blocked their way. [17] Consequently, Mihr-Mihroe, having no means of dislodging his opponents by force, led his army back and immediately moved on Archaiopolis with the intention of besieging it. But, he met with no success when he made trial of the walls and so turned back again. [18] But the Romans followed up the retreating enemy and in a dangerous pass began to kill many of them, among those who fell being, as it chanced, the ruler of the Sabeiroi. [19] A fierce battle took place over the corpse, and the Persians finally, at dusk, forced their opponents back and routed them, after which they retired to Kotaïs and Mocheresis. That, then, was what the Romans and the Persians did.[800]

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798. The story of the eggs being transported in hollow canes comes from Theophanes of Byzantion, writing in the late sixth century, whose history was summarized by Photios, *Bibliotheke* cod. 64.

799. 8.10.1.

800. The history of the war in Lazike would be continued by Agathias and Menandros.

[20] As for Libya, affairs there had taken an altogether favorable turn for the Romans. Ioannes, whom the emperor Justinian had appointed general there, met with a number of incredible pieces of good fortune.[801] [21] After securing the allegiance of one of the Moorish rulers, Koutzinas by name, he first defeated the others in battle, and not long afterward reduced to subjection Antalas and Iaudas, who held power over the Moors of Byzacium and Numidia, and they followed him as his slaves. [22] As a result, the Romans at this time had no enemy in Libya. But because of the previous wars and insurrections the land remained for the most part destitute of human habitation.

18. While these events were taking place as described, the following transpired in Europe.[802] As I stated in a previous book,[803] the Gepids had confirmed a treaty with their enemies the Lombards. [2] But being unable to resolve their differences with them, they decided not much later that they must make war. [3] So the Gepids and the Lombards advanced in full force against each other, both being fully pre-
550 pared for the war. [4] The rulers were Thorisin of the Gepids and Audoin of the Lombards, each followed by many thousands of men. They had already come close to one another, but the two armies could not yet see each other. [5] But that fright which is called panic suddenly fell upon both armies and drove the men all backward into a flight that had no real cause, and only the commanders stayed where they were with a few men. [6] Though they tried to bring their men back and check the retreat, they could accomplish nothing either by abject entreaty or terrible threats. [7] So Audoin became thoroughly frightened at seeing the men taking to their heels in this disorderly manner (for he did not know that the enemy had shared the same fate), and immediately sent some of his followers on an embassy to his opponents to beg for peace. [8] But these men, when they came to Thorisin, the ruler of the Gepids, observed what was taking place and understood firsthand what had happened to the enemy, so they asked Thorisin, when they came into his presence, where in the world the army of his subjects was. [9] Without denying what happened, he said, "They are fleeing, although no one pursues." Thereupon the envoys replied by saying, "This is the very thing that has happened to the Lombards also. Seeing that you speak the truth, O king, we will conceal nothing on our side. [10] As it is not the will of God that these nations perish, and for this reason he dissolved the battle lines, smiting both armies with a saving fear, come now, let us too yield to the will of God by putting an end to the war." "Very well, let it be so," said Thorisin. [11] They made a truce for two years, so that by maintaining diplomatic relations and keeping in constant communication with each other in the interval, they might settle all their differences thoroughly. So at that time they each withdrew on these terms.

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801. This was still Ioannes Troglita, whose exploits were recorded in heroic verse by Corippus, *Iohannis*. His major victory over the Moors took place in 548, at the battle of the Plains of Cato.

802. I.e., the Balkans and the Danube frontier.

803. 7.34.45.

[12] But during this truce they found that they were unable to settle their differences with each other, and they were again about to resort to war. [13] The Gepids, fearing the Roman empire (for the Romans were expected to array themselves with the Lombards), thought to invite some Huns to make an alliance. [14] They sent, accordingly, to the rulers of the Kutrigurs, who live on this side of the Sea of Azov, and begged that they join them in the war against the Lombards. [15] These Huns sent them immediately twelve thousand men, under different commanders, among whom was Chinialon, an especially capable warrior. [16] But the Gepids were for the moment embarrassed by the presence of these barbarians, as the time of the battle had not yet arrived, for the truce still had a year to run, and so they persuaded them to overrun the emperor's land in the meantime, thus turning their own lack of planning into a side project, an attack on the Romans. [17] But as the Romans were guarding carefully the crossing of the Danube river both in Illyria and in the land of Thrace, they themselves ferried these Huns across the Danube at a point where their territory touched the river and turned them loose in the Roman domain. [18] They had plundered practically the whole country there when the emperor Justinian hit upon the following plan. Sending to the rulers of the Utigur Huns, who live on the other side of the Sea of Azov, he reproached them and branded as unjust their inactivity with regard to the Kutrigurs, if indeed one ought to consider as the height of injustice the act of passively watching the destruction of one's friends. *551*

> [19] "The Kutrigurs," he said, "disregard their neighbors, the Utigurs, although they receive great sums of money every year from Byzantion and are unwilling in any way to cease from their injustice toward the Romans, and are every day raiding and plundering them for no good reason. [20] Although the Utigurs themselves gain no portion of this plunder nor share in the booty with the Kutrigurs, still, they are not siding with the Romans who are being wronged, although they have been friends of theirs since ancient times." *Justinian to the Utigurs*

[21] The emperor Justinian, by sending this message to the Utigurs, and by not only making a gift of money to them but also reminding them of all the gifts they had previously received from him on many occasions, persuaded them immediately to make an attack upon the Kutrigurs who had remained behind. [22] So they first made an alliance with two thousand of the Goths called Tetraxitai, who are their neighbors, and then crossed the Don river in full force. [23] They were led by Sandil, a man of the greatest cleverness and experienced in many wars, and one, moreover, well-endowed in strength and manliness. [24] After they had crossed the river, they engaged with a large number of Kutrigurs who met them. As they offered a most vigorous resistance to their assailants, the battle continued for a long time, but finally the Utigurs routed their opponents and slew many. Only a few of them, by fleeing wherever each man found it possible, saved themselves. Then their enemy enslaved their women and children and so departed for home.

19. While these barbarians were fighting it out with each other in the manner described, and when the battle was now at the most critical point, the Romans got very lucky. [2] For all those Romans who chanced to be captives among the Kutrigurs, amounting, as

they say, to many tens of thousands, during this struggle departed hastily from there without being detected and, as no one followed them, reached their native land, thus profiting by another nation's victory at the time of their direst need. [3] The emperor Justinian now sent the general Aratios to Chinialon and the rest of the Huns, with orders to report to them what had happened in their own land and, by offering them money, to persuade them to depart with all possible speed from the territory of the Romans. [4] So these Huns, upon learning of the inroad of the Utigurs and receiving at the same time a large sum of money from Aratios, agreed that they would no longer kill anyone nor enslave any Roman nor do any other harm, but would withdraw, treating the people on the way as friends. [5] And this also was agreed upon, that if, on the one hand, these barbarians were able to return and settle in their own country, they would both remain there and hold fast for the future their allegiance to the Romans; but if, on the other hand, it proved impossible for them to remain in that land, they would return once more to Roman territory and the emperor would confer upon them some district in Thrace, on condition that they settle there and be forever at peace with the Romans while they assisted in guarding the land diligently against all barbarians.

[6] By this time two thousand of the Huns who had been defeated in the battle and escaped from the Utigurs had entered the Roman empire, bringing their wives and children. [7] Among their several leaders was Sinnion, who long before had marched with Belisarios against Gelimer and the Vandals, and they now became suppliants of the emperor Justinian. He received them with all kindness and urged them to settle in Thrace. [8] But when Sandil, the king of the Utigurs, learned this, he was exasperated and filled with anger, seeing that, while he himself, by way of punishing the Kutrigurs who were his kinsmen for the wrong they had done the Romans, had driven them from their ancestral land, they for their part had been received by the emperor, had settled in the land of the Romans, and were going to live much more comfortably. He accordingly sent envoys to the emperor to protest at what had been done, not putting any letter into their hands—for the Huns are absolutely unacquainted with writing and unskilled in it up to now; neither do they have any teacher of grammar nor do their children toil over their letters at all as they grow up—but instructing them rather to deliver by word of mouth in the barbarian fashion everything that he told them. [9] So when these envoys came into the presence of the emperor Justinian, they stated that their king Sandil spoke through them as by a letter as follows:

Sandil to Justinian

I know a certain proverb that I have heard since childhood and, if I remember it correctly, it runs somewhat as follows. [10] That wild beast, the wolf, might, they say, possibly be able to change the color of his fur to some degree, but he cannot change his character, for nature does not permit him to adjust it. [11] This proverb, says Sandil, I have heard from my elders, who thus hinted at the ways of men. And I know something also that I have learned from experience, one of those things that it would be natural for a rough barbarian to learn: [12] shepherds take dogs when they are still suckling and rear them with all care in the house, for the dog is an animal grateful to those who feed it and never forgets a favor. This is obviously done by the shepherds with this purpose, that when wolves attack the flock at any

time, the dogs may repel their attacks, standing over the sheep as guardians and saviors. And I think this takes place throughout the whole world. [13] For no man in the world has at any time seen dogs attacking a flock nor wolves defending it, but nature as a lawmaker has established this as a kind of rule, as it were, for dogs, sheep, and wolves. [14] I think that even in your empire, where practically everything is found in abundance, including doubtless even impossible things, there is not the slightest deviation from this rule. [15] Otherwise do show it to my envoys so that on the threshold of old age we may actually learn something new.[804] But if these things are by nature everywhere fixed, it is not, I think, a fair thing for you to receive hospitably the nation of the Kutrigurs, inviting in a foul set of neighbors and taking people into your home whom you could not endure when they were beyond your boundaries. [16] For they will soon show their true character toward the Romans and, apart from this, enemies will not be lacking who will prey upon the Roman domain in the hope that, if defeated, they will be better off at your hands; nor will a friend be left to the Romans who some day will stand in the way of those who would overrun your land, through fear that, if he prevails by the gift of fortune, he may see the vanquished faring more splendidly than himself at your hands, seeing that while we eke out our existence in a deserted and thoroughly unproductive land, the Kutrigurs are free to traffic in grain and get roaring drunk in their wine cellars and live on the fat of the land. [17] Doubtless they have baths too and are wearing gold—those vagabonds—and have no lack of fine clothes that are embroidered and overlaid with gold. [18] Yet these same Kutrigurs had previously enslaved countless thousands of Romans and carried them off to their own land. [19] These cursed men have made a point of imposing all the indignities of slavery upon these victims, to whip those who had done no wrong or to put them to death for trivial offenses, and they practiced other such cruelties as befit the natural inclination and power of a barbarian master. [20] We, however, by struggles and perils that brought our lives into danger, delivered them from the fate that then held them and restored them to their parents, so that they became the trophy of our success in war. [21] For these things we and they have received from you rewards of an opposite nature, if it is true that we still partake of our ancestral woes while they are allotted an equal share in the land of those who escaped from being their slaves by our valor.

[22] That is what the envoys of the Utigurs said. But the emperor, after winning them over with many words and comforting them with a quantity of gifts, sent them away not long afterward. Such was the course of these events.

20. At about this time war and battles sprang up between the nation of the Varni and soldiers who live on the island called Brittia;[805] and it came about from the following

804. Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 10.60; Herodotos, *Histories* 3.14.

805. The Varni were Germanic people living in northern Germany, attested already in the second century, e.g., by Tacitus, *Germania* 40. "Brittia" is possibly Jutland but Britain has also been proposed (given the wall).

cause. [2] The Varni live beyond the Danube river and extend as far as the northern Ocean along the river Rhine, which separates them from the Franks and the other nations who live in that region. [3] Now among all these nations that in ancient times lived on both sides of the Rhine river, each people had its own particular name, but the whole group was called in common Germans. [4] The island of Brittia lies in this Ocean not far from the coast, about two hundred stades off and roughly opposite the mouths of the Rhine, and between Britain and the island of Thule. [5] While Britain lies to the west about in line with the extreme end of Spain, and is separated from the continent by a distance of at least four thousand stades,[806] Brittia is toward the back of Gaul, that side namely which faces the Ocean, being, that is, to the north of both Spain and Britain. [6] Thule, as far as men know at any rate, is situated toward the extremity of the northern Ocean. But a description of Britain and of Thule has been set down by me in a preceding book.[807] The island of Brittia is inhabited by three numerous nations, and each has a king over it. [7] The names of these nations are the Angles, Frisians, and Brittons, the last named from the island itself. [8] So great appears to be the population of these nations that every year they emigrate in large companies with their women and children and go to the land of the Franks. [9] The Franks allow them to settle in the part of their land that appears to be more deserted, and by this means they say that they are winning over the island. [10] Thus it actually happened not long ago that the king of the Franks, when he sent some of his associates on an embassy to the emperor Justinian in Byzantion, sent with them some of the Angles, thus seeking to establish his claim that this island was ruled by him. Such then are the facts relating to the island that is called Brittia.[808]

[11] The Varni, not long ago, were ruled by a man named Hermegisclus. He was eager to strengthen his kingdom and had married the sister of Theudebert, the ruler of the Franks.[809] [12] His previous wife had died recently, having been the mother of one child, Radigis by name, whom she left to his father. The latter sought a marriage for this child with a maiden born in Brittia, whose brother was then king of the nation of the Angles, and had given her a large sum of money for the engagement. [13] Now this man, while riding with the most notable Varni in a certain place, saw a bird sitting in a tree and croaking loudly. [14] Whether he really understood the bird's speech or, possessing some other knowledge, prodigiously understood the prophecy made by the bird, he immediately told those with him that he would die forty days later. [15] For this, he said, was revealed to him by the bird's prediction.

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806. It has been proposed that Prokopios' *Brettania* in this entire passage is Brittany (ancient Armorica), not Britain, making this the first attestation of that name (which is used by later writers in the sixth century).

807. 6.15.4–26.

808. If Brittia is Britain here, this would be the earliest reference to the migration of these peoples there; cf. the contemporary testimony of Gildas, *On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain*, and the much later *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

809. This (second) wife was presumably Theudechildis. Venantius Fortunatus wrote two poems in her honor (*Carmina* 4.25, 6.3).

Hermegisclus to the Varni

"Having made provision," he said, "that you live most securely and at ease, I have made a marriage alliance with the Franks by taking from their country the wife who is now my consort, and I have bestowed Brittia upon my son by betrothal. [16] But now, as I expect to die soon and, as far as this wife is concerned, I am without issue male or female, and my son, moreover, is still unwed and without his bride, come now, let me communicate my plan to you and, if it seems to you to be not without some merit, you should ratify it and put it into motion under the best auspices as soon as I reach the term of my life. [17] I think, then, that it will be more in the interest of the Varni to make the marriage alliance with the Franks than the islanders. [18] For the men of Brittia are not even able to join forces with you except after a long and difficult journey, while the Varni and Franks have only the water of the Rhine between them, so that they, being very close neighbors to you and having achieved an enormous power, have the means at hand both to help you and to harm you whenever they wish. [19] And they will undoubtedly harm you if the said marriage alliance does not prevent them. Men naturally find a neighboring state's power, when it surpasses their own, grievous and a ready cause of injustice, for a powerful neighbor may with comparative ease find pretexts for war against his neighbors who are doing no wrong. [20] Given that the facts are these, let the island girl who has been engaged to this boy be given up by you along with all the money she has received from us for this purpose; let her keep it as remuneration for the indignity, as the common law of mankind has it. But let my son Radigis be married to his stepmother, as our ancestral law permits us."

[21] So he spoke, and on the fortieth day after the prediction he fell sick and fulfilled his destiny. Then the son of Hermegisclus, after taking over the kingdom of the Varni, carried out the advice of the dead king by the will of the notable men among these barbarians and, immediately renouncing his marriage with his betrothed, was wedded to his stepmother. [22] But when the betrothed of Radigis learned this, she could not bear the indignity of her position and sought to wreak vengeance upon him for his insult to her. [23] For so highly is virtue regarded among those barbarians, that when only the name of marriage has been mentioned among them, although the fact has not been accomplished, the woman is considered to have been claimed and tainted. [24] First, then, she sent an embassy to him of some of her kinsmen and asked why he had insulted her, given that she had neither been unfaithful nor done him any other wrong. [25] But as she was unable to accomplish anything by this means, she took up the duties of a man and proceeded to deeds of war. [26] She collected four hundred ships and put on board an army of not fewer than a hundred thousand fighting men, and she in person led this expedition against the Varni. [27] She also took with her one of her brothers who was to assist her in settling the situation, not that he was holding the kingship, for he was still living in the position of a private citizen. [28] Now these islanders are valiant beyond any of the barbarians we know, and they enter battle on foot. [29] This is not only because they are unpracticed in horsemanship, but the fact is that they do not even know what a horse is, as they never see so much as a picture of a horse on that island; for it is clear that this

animal has at no time lived in Brittia. [30] Whenever it happens that some of them on an embassy or some other mission visit the Romans or the Franks or any other nation that has horses, and they must there ride on horseback, they are altogether unable to get upon their backs, but other men lift them up and thus mount them on the horses, and when they wish to get off, they are again lifted and placed on the ground. [31] Nor, in fact, are the Varni horsemen either, but they too all march on foot. Such, then, are these barbarians. There were no spare rowers in this fleet, for all the men pulled with their own hands. Nor do these islanders have sails, as it happens, but they always navigate by rowing alone.

[32] When they came to land on the continent, the maiden who commanded them, having established a strong stockade by the mouth of the Rhine river, remained there with a small number, but commanded her brother to lead all the rest of the army against the enemy. [33] Now the Varni at that time were encamped not far from the shore of the Ocean and the mouth of the Rhine. So when the Angles reached that place, marching swiftly, the two armies engaged in combat with one another, and the Varni were defeated decisively. [34] Many of them fell in the battle while the entire number of those remaining, together with the king, turned to retreat, and the Angles, after keeping up the pursuit for only a short distance, as is customary for infantry, returned to their camp. [35] But the maiden rebuked them when they returned to her and inveighed most vehemently against her brother, declaring that the army had achieved nothing worthy of mention because they had not brought her Radigis alive. [36] She then selected the most warlike among them and sent them off immediately, instructing them to bring the man captive by any means. [37] They then carried out her mission and went around searching that whole country thoroughly until they found Radigis hiding in a dense wood. They bound him and took him back to the girl. [38] So he stood before her eyes trembling and expecting to die instantly by the most cruel death. But she, contrary to his expectations, neither killed him nor inflicted any other harm upon him, but by way of reproaching him for his insult to her, asked the man why in the world he had made light of the agreement and taken another woman to bed, and that too even though his betrothed had not been unfaithful. [39] Trying to defend himself against the charge, he brought forward the commands of his father and the zeal of his subjects, and he uttered words of supplication and mixed many prayers in with his defense, excusing his action by invoking necessity. [40] If it was her will that they be married he promised that what he had done unjustly in the past would be fixed by his subsequent conduct. [41] When this was approved by the girl, Radigis was released from his bonds and received kind treatment in all other matters; he immediately dismissed the sister of Theudebert and wedded the girl from Brittia. Thus did these events take place.

[42] Now in this island of Brittia the men of ancient times built a long wall, cutting off a large part of it, and the air, the soil, and everything else is not alike on the two sides of it. [43] For to the east of the wall there is a salubrious air, changing with the seasons, so that it is moderately warm in summer and cool in winter. [44] Many people live there in the same fashion as other men, the trees abound with fruits that ripen at the right season, and the fields yield grain as abundantly as any other; furthermore, [45] the land seems to boast an abundance of spring water. But on the west side everything is the opposite

of this, so that it is actually impossible for a man to survive there even for half an hour, as countless snakes and serpents and every other kind of wild beast have claimed this area as their own. [46] Strangest of all, the locals say that if any man crosses the wall and goes to the other side, he dies immediately, being unable to endure the pestilential air of that region, and death also instantly takes any wild animals that go there. [47] As I have reached this point in the history, it is necessary for me to record a story that bears a very close resemblance to mythology, a story that did not seem to me at all trustworthy although it was constantly being reported by countless persons who maintained that they had done the thing with their own hands and had heard the words with their own ears, and yet it cannot be altogether passed over in case that, in writing an account of the island of Brittia, I gain a lasting reputation for ignorance of what takes place there.

[48] They say, then, that the souls of men who die are always conveyed to this place. I will now explain how this happens, having often heard the people there most earnestly describe it, although I have come to the conclusion that the tales they tell are to be attributed to the power of dreams. [49] Along the coast of the Ocean that lies opposite the island of Brittia there are numerous villages. These are inhabited by men who fish with nets or till the soil or carry on a sea trade with this island, being in other respects subject to the Franks except that they never pay them tribute, that burden having been remitted to them from ancient times on account, as they say, of a certain service, which I now describe. [50] The men of this place say that the task of escorting souls is laid upon them in turn. So the men who on the following night must go to do this work, relieving others in the service, retire to their own houses and sleep as soon as it is dark, awaiting him who is to assemble them for the task. [51] At a late hour of the night they hear a knocking at their doors and an indistinct voice calling them together to the deed. [52] With no hesitation they rise from their beds and walk to the shore, not understanding what necessity was driving them to do this, but compelled nevertheless. [53] There they see skiffs in readiness but empty of men, not their own skiffs, however, but a different kind, in which they embark and lay hold of the oars. [54] They are aware that the boats are burdened with a large number of passengers and are wet by the waves to the edge of the planks and the oarlocks, having not so much as one finger's breadth above the water, yet they see no one inside. And after rowing for a single hour they put in at Brittia. [55] Yet when they make the voyage in their own skiffs, not using sails but rowing, they barely make this passage in a night and a day. Then when they have reached the island and have been relieved of their burden, they depart with all speed, their boats now becoming suddenly light and rising above the waves, for they sink no further in the water than the keel itself. [56] And they neither see any man either sitting in the boat with them or departing from the boat, but they say that they hear a kind of voice from the island that seems to announce to them by name each of those who have sailed along with them, itemizing the positions of honor they formerly held and using their fathers' names too. [57] If women also happen to be among those who have been ferried over, they utter the names of the men to whom they were married in life. [58] This, then, is what the men of this country say takes place. I now return to my previous narrative.

21. Such was the progress of the wars in each land. And the Gothic War continued as follows. After the emperor had summoned Belisarios to Byzantion, as stated in the previous book,[810] he held him in honor, and not even at the death of Germanos did he think to send him to Italy, but he actually appointed him commander of the imperial guards in his capacity as general of the East, and kept him there. [2] Belisarios was the first among all the Romans in dignity, although some had been enrolled before him among the patricians and had actually ascended to the seat of the consuls. [3] But even so they all yielded first place to him, being ashamed in view of his achievements to cite the law and claim the right that it conferred, which pleased the emperor greatly. [4] Meanwhile Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, was passing the winter in Salona. During this time the commanders of the Roman army, expecting him in Italy, remained inactive. And the winter drew to its close and the sixteenth year ended in this Gothic War, the history of which Prokopios has written.[811]

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[5] When the following year opened, Ioannes thought to depart from Salona and lead his army as quickly as possible against Totila and the Goths. [6] But the emperor prevented him, ordering him remain there until Narses the eunuch arrived. For he had decided to appoint him commander in chief in this war. [7] The reason why the emperor had made this decision was explicitly clear to no one in the world. It is impossible to know an emperor's mind unless he wills it, but I will disclose what people were saying based on guesswork. [8] The thought had occurred to the emperor Justinian that the other commanders of the Roman army would be unwilling to take orders from Ioannes, not consenting to be in any way inferior to him in rank. [9] He feared that, by being at cross purposes with each other or by holding back in envy, they might ruin the operation. [10] I also heard the following explanation given by a Roman when I was residing in Rome; he was a member of the senate. [11] This Roman said that once, during the time when Athalaric, the grandson of Theoderic, was ruling Italy, a herd of cattle came into Rome in the late evening from the fields through the forum that the Romans call the Forum of Peace; [12] for in that place has been situated from ancient times the temple of Peace, which was struck by lightning.[812] There is an ancient fountain before this forum, and a bronze bull stands by it, the work, I think, of Pheidias the Athenian or of Lysippos. [13] There are many statues in this place which are the works of these two men. Here is also another statue that is certainly the work of Pheidias, for the inscription on the statue says so. [14] There too is the calf of Myron.[813] For the ancient Romans went to great lengths to adorn Rome with the most beautiful works of Greece. [15] So he said that one of the cattle then passing by—a steer—left the herd and, mounted this fountain, and stood over

810. 7.34.1.

811. I.e., the year (roughly) from spring 550 to spring 551.

812. The Temple of Peace was dedicated by Vespasian in 75 AD; it contained the spoils of Jerusalem and a library (Josephos, *Jewish War* 7.5.7). It burned in 191, but was restored; its floor was discovered in 2005. The Forum of Peace adjoined the Forum of Nerva.

813. Myron, an Athenian, cast statues in bronze in the mid-fifth century BC. A number of epigrams in the *Greek Anthology* concern this very statue (see 9.713–42, 793–98), many of which play on how other cattle are likely to take it for real.

the brazen bull. [16] By some chance a certain man of Tuscan birth was passing by, who appeared to be a rustic, and he understood the scene that was being enacted and said (for the Tuscans even down to my day are gifted with prophecy) that one day a eunuch would undo the ruler of Rome. [17] At that time the Tuscan and his utterance earned only laughter. For before the facts play out men tend to mock prophecies, because the proof of them has not come about and what they say is not credible but seems akin to some ridiculous myth. [18] But now all men, acknowledging the arguments made by actual events, marvel at this sign. [19] It was perhaps for this reason that Narses marched as general against Totila, because either the emperor's judgment saw into the future or Chance ordained the inevitable. [20] So Narses set out, receiving a formidable army and great sums of money from the emperor. *Apr. 551* [21] When he came with his men into the midst of Thrace, he spent some time at Philippoupolis, blocked from his road. [22] For an army of Huns had raided into the Roman domain and were plundering and pillaging everything with no one to stand in their way. But after some of them had advanced against Thessalonike and the rest took the road to Byzantion, Narses departed from there and advanced.

22. While Ioannes was at Salona awaiting Narses, and Narses was traveling slowly, blocked by the inroad of the Huns, Totila was awaiting the army of Narses and did as follows. [2] He placed part of the Romans and some of the members of the senate in Rome, leaving the rest in Campania. [3] He commanded them to look after the city as well as they could, thereby showing plainly that he felt remorse for what he had done to Rome previously; for he had, as it happened, burned large parts of it, particularly on the further side of the Tiber river.[814] [4] But these Romans, being now reduced to the state of captives and stripped of all their money, were not only unable to lay claim to the public funds but could not even secure those that belonged to them personally.[815] [5] Still, the Romans love their city above all the men we know, and are eager to protect all their ancestral legacy and preserve it, so that nothing of the ancient glory of Rome may be obliterated. [6] Even though they lived long under barbarian sway, they preserved the buildings of the city and most of its adornments, those which could withstand so long a lapse of time and such neglect through the sheer excellence of their workmanship. [7] Furthermore, all the memorials of the race that were still left are preserved even to this day, among them the ship of Aeneas, the founder of the city, an altogether incredible sight.[816] [8] For they built a ship-house in the middle of the city on the bank of the Tiber and, depositing it there, they have preserved it from that time. I will now explain what sort of a ship this is, having seen it myself. [9] The ship has a single bank of oars and is very long, being 120 feet in length and 25 feet wide, and its height is all that it can be without becoming impossible

814. 7.22.6–7.

815. 7.20.27–31.

816. No other source mentions this monument. According to *Aeneid* 9.77–122, Aeneas' ships were made of pines sacred to the Mother of the Gods from Phrygian Ida, and turned to nymphs when he arrived in Italy. The Navalia (ship sheds) were on the left bank of the Tiber and so not in the middle of the city.

to row. [10] But nowhere in the boat is there any piecing together of the timbers at all, nor are the timbers fastened together by any iron device, but all are of one piece, a thing strange and unheard of and true only, as far as we know, of this one boat. [11] For the keel, which is a single piece, extends from the extreme stern to the bow, gradually sinking to the middle of the ship in a remarkable way and then rising again from there properly and in due order until it stands upright and rigid. [12] All the heavy timbers that fit into the keel (these the poets call "oak-stays," but others call them "shepherds") extend each from one side all the way to the other side of the ship. [13] These, too, sloping down from either end, form a remarkably shapely bend in order that the ship may be fashioned with a wide hull, whether nature originally carved out the timbers and fashioned this arch according to the needs of their use, or the sweep of the ribs was properly adjusted by craftsmen's skill and other devices. [14] Each plank, furthermore, extends from the very stem to the other end of the ship, being of one piece and pierced by iron spikes for this purpose, that by being fastened to the timbers they may form the side of the ship. [15] This ship thus constructed makes an impression when seen that transcends all description, for the nature of artifice always makes those works which are most cunningly built not easy for men to describe, but by means of innovations so prevails over our usual habits of mind as to defeat even our power of speech. [16] None of these timbers has either rotted or given the least indication of being unsound, but the ship, intact throughout, just as if newly built by the hand of the builder, whoever he was, has preserved its strength in a marvelous way even to my time. Such are the facts relating to the ship of Aeneas.

551 [17] Totila now manned three hundred longships with Goths and ordered them to go to Greece, instructing them to make every effort to capture those who fell in their way. [18] But this fleet, as far as the land of the Phaeacians, which is now called Kerkyra,[817] was able to do no damage. [19] For it happens that there is no inhabited island in the stretch of sea from the strait of Charybdis as far as Kerkyra, so that many times when I have passed that way I have been at a loss to know where on earth the island of Kalypso was.[818] [20] For nowhere in that sea have I seen an island with the exception of three not far from Phaeacia, and they are only about three hundred stades distant, huddled close together, tiny, and with no habitations either of men or animals or anything else at all. These islands are now called Othonoi.[819] [21] One might say that Kalypso lived there, and that Odysseus, consequently, being not far from the land of Phaeacia, ferried himself over from here on a raft, as Homer says,[820] or by some other means without any ship. But I mention this only as a possible interpretation. [22] It is not easy to reconcile the actual facts precisely with the most ancient records, as the long passage of time likes to change the names of places and the beliefs concerning them. [23] Consider the ship which stands

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817. The island of the mythical Phaeacians (to whom Odysseus recounts his adventures and who take him to Ithake) was already identified with Kerkyra in classical times.

818. Kalypso's island was named Ogygia (Homer, *Odyssey* 7.254); for a description, see 5.58–74. Odysseus claims to have reached it after passing through Skylla and Charybdis (ibid., 12.430–50). There were many theories in antiquity as to its location.

819. The island of Othonoi is northwest of Kerkyra.

820. Homer, *Odyssey* 5.33.

by the shore of the land of the Phaeacians, made of white stone: it is supposed by some to be the very one that carried Odysseus to Ithake at the time when he was escorted there.[821] [24] Yet this boat is not a monolith, but is made up of a large number of stones. [25] An inscription has been cut in it which cries out that some merchant in earlier times set up this offering to Zeus Kasios. [26] For the men of this place once honored Zeus Kasios, seeing as the city in which this boat stands is called up to the present time Kasope.[822] [27] And that other ship is also made of many stones, I mean the one that Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, dedicated to Artemis at Geraistos in Euboia, seeking in this way to appease her for the insult that he did when, through the suffering of Iphigeneia, Artemis permitted the Greeks to set sail.[823] [28] This is declared by an inscription on this boat in hexameters that was engraved either then or later. Most of it has disappeared because of the passage of time, but the first verses are discernible even to the present and run as follows:

> Here Agamemnon set me, a ship of marble,
> a sign of the fleet of the Greeks setting sail.

[29] At the beginning it has the words: "Made by Tynnichos, to Artemis Bolosia"; for thus they used to name Eileithyia in former times, because they called labor pains *bolai*.[824] But I must return to the point from which I digressed.

[30] When the Gothic fleet reached Kerkyra, they plundered it thoroughly in a sudden raid, and also the other islands called Sybotai that lie near it; [31] then suddenly crossing over to the mainland also, they plundered the whole country about Dodone, and particularly Nikopolis and Anchialos, where the locals say that Anchises, the father of Aeneas, passed from the world while he was sailing from captured Troy with his son, and thus gave the place its name.[825] [32] Going about the whole coast and meeting

821. Poseidon turned the ship on which the Phaeacians returned Odysseus to Ithake into stone, by the entrance to the harbor of their island (Homer, *Odyssey* 13.157–87).

822. There was a harbor Kassiope on the north coast of Kerkyra and a Kassope close to the coast of Epeiros, north of Nikopolis. The cult of Zeus Kasios is attested on Kerkyra (Pliny, *Natural History* 4.52; Suetonius, *Nero* 22), and on inscriptions and coins of the island.

823. Geraistos was an important harbor on the southeastern tip of Euboia, near Karystos; it was visited by the heroes returning from Troy (Homer, *Odyssey* 3.176–79). The "insult" was that Agamemnon had killed one of Artemis' deer, so she stopped the winds, preventing his fleet from sailing to Troy.

824. Eileithyia was a goddess who presided over childbirth. *Bolê* was a "throw," e.g., of a missile. A woman in labor could be said to experience an arrow, *belos* (Homer, *Iliad* 11.269), associated here with Eileithyia.

825. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Anchises dies and is buried in Sicily (3.707–15). There is no city Anchialos in this part of Greece (the name means "by the sea"). Prokopios' contemporary Stephanos of Byzantion, reports in his *Ethnika* that in addition to the Anchialos in Kilikia there was another in Illyria, a Parian colony by Scheria (i.e., the island of the Phaeacians; the prefecture of Illyria included Greece at this time). This may be the town Onchesmos, on the coast across from Kerkyra; Dionysios of Halikarnassos, *Roman Antiquities* 1.51.2, says that it used to be called Anchises' Harbor. Many places claimed to have the tomb of Anchises, e.g., the Troad, Latium, and Arkadia; for the last, see Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 8.12.8–9, near a mountain named Anchisia after him.

many Roman ships, they captured every one of them, cargoes and all. Among these happened to be also some of the ships that were carrying provisions from Greece for the army of Narses. Thus then did these things take place.

23. Long before this Totila had sent an army of Goths into Picenum, in order to capture Ancona;[826] and he appointed as commanders of this army the most notable men among the Goths, Scipuar, Gival, and Gundulf, who had once been a spearman of Belisarios [2] (some called him Indulf). He gave them also forty-seven longships, in order that, in besieging the fortress by land and by sea, they could overpower it easier and with less effort. [3] After this siege had continued a long time, it came about that the besieged were hard-pressed by the scarcity of provisions. [4] When Valerianos, who was waiting at Ravenna, learned this, being unable to help the Romans in Ancona by himself, he sent a messenger with the following letter to Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, who was at Salona.

summer 551

Valerianos to Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos

Ancona is the only city left to us south of the Sea, as you yourself know, if indeed we still hold it. [5] For the situation of the Romans who are being most closely besieged in this city is such that I fear that we might be late with our assistance, showing zeal after the critical time and displaying our enthusiasm for it a day too late. [6] I will stop there. For the constraint imposed upon the besieged does not permit my letter to be made longer, sucking up time itself for its own purpose, while the danger demands assistance more swift than words.

[7] When Ioannes had read this letter, he dared to go on his own initiative though it had been forbidden him by the emperor, considering their pressured condition, which had been brought about by chance, a more serious matter than the imperial commands. [8] So selecting men whom he considered the most able fighters of all, and manning thirty-eight longships with them—boats of great swiftness built well for warfare at sea—and, putting a few of his provisions aboard, he set sail from Salona and put in at Scardona. Valerianos also came there not long afterward with twelve ships.

[9] After joining forces they conferred with each other and made plans that seemed to promise them the greatest advantage; then they set sail from there and, upon reaching the opposite mainland, anchored at a place which the Romans call Senigallia, not far from Ancona. [10] When the Gothic generals learned this, they too immediately manned with the notable Goths the longships that they had with them, forty-seven in number; [11] leaving the rest of the army engaged in the siege of the fortress, they advanced straight against their enemy. [12] Scipuar commanded those who remained to carry on the siege, and Gival and Gundulf commanded the men on the ships. [13] When the two forces came near each other, both commanders stopped their ships, drew them close together, and made exhortations to the soldiers. [14] Ioannes and Valerianos spoke first as follows:

826. 7.30.18.

Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, and Valerianos to their men

Let not one of you, fellow soldiers, think that you are now struggling over this city of Ancona alone and the Romans besieged in it, nor that the result of this struggle will affect that issue only, but rather our fight is for the outcome of the whole war, to speak comprehensively, and to whichever side the battle inclines here will be given also the final decision of fortune. [15] You should regard the situation as follows. The outcome of war depends largely upon the commissary, and those who lack supplies are inevitably defeated by their enemy. [16] For valor cannot dwell together with hunger, as nature will not permit a man to be starving and to be brave at the same time. [17] This being the case, we have no other stronghold left to us from Otranto to Ravenna where we can deposit food supplies for ourselves and our horses, and the enemy holds the land so thoroughly that not a single town remains there friendly to us, from which we could provide ourselves with supplies even in small measure. [18] It is on Ancona alone that our whole expectation is based that the army sailing in from the opposite mainland can land here and be in safety. [19] Consequently, if we fare well in today's encounter and secure Ancona for the emperor, as is probable, we will perhaps be in a position henceforth to hope that the rest of the Gothic War will likewise go well for us. [20] If, however, we fail in this battle—but we should not speak of further calamity; may God grant to the Romans lasting mastery over Italy. This too is worth considering, that if we show ourselves cowards in the struggle even flight will be impossible. [21] For neither will you have the land, seeing as it is held tightly by our opponents, nor will you be able to sail on the sea, which is under enemy control too. It has come to this: our hope of safety lies in our own hands alone and will shape itself in accordance with our performance during the combat. [22] Be valiant, then, as far as it is in your power, taking this to heart, that if you are defeated now you will suffer your last defeat, but if you are victorious you will not only win glory but will also be ranked among the very fortunate.

[23] Thus spoke Ioannes and Valerianos. The commanders of the Goths made the following exhortation:

Gothic commanders to their men

These accursed wretches, after being driven out of all of Italy and hiding for a long time in we know not what corners of the earth or sea now have the gall to engage with us and come against us to renew the fight. It is then necessary to block with full determination the daring to which their stupidity has led them, in case their madness swells to huge dimensions if we give way now. [24] For foolishness that is not stopped in the beginning swells up into infinite daring, but ends up in irreparable harm to those concerned. [25] Show them, therefore, as quickly as possible that they are Greeklings, unmanly by nature, and that they are merely putting on a bold face when defeated, and do not allow this experiment of theirs to go further. [26] For cowardice, when merely despised, is emboldened, because audacity loses its restraints merely by being allowed to exist. [27] Do not by any means think that they will resist you long if you fight bravely. When morale is not matched by a commensurate power on the part of those who

> are lifted by it, it may appear exalted to the highest degree before the event, but when combat begins it tends to collapse. [28] Given that this is the case, recall how the enemy have fared on the many occasions when they have made trial of your valor, and consider that in coming against you they have not become better men on the spur of the moment, but are merely showing their daring just as on previous occasions, and it will have the same outcome for them too.

[29] After the Gothic commanders had made this exhortation, they confronted the enemy and without delay closed with them. This naval battle was extremely fierce and resembled a battle on land. [30] For both sides set their ships head on with the bows against those of their opponents and shot their arrows against each other; all who laid some claim to valor brought their ships close enough to touch one another and then engaged from the decks, fighting with sword and spear just as if on a plain. [31] Such was the opening phase of this encounter. But after this the barbarians, through lack of experience in sea-fighting, began to carry on the combat with great disorder, for some of them became so far separated from each other that they gave the enemy opportunity to ram them singly, while others clustered together in large groups and were constantly hindered by each other because of the crowding of their boats. [32] One might imagine that the decks of their boats were built together like a mat. They were unable to shoot their bows against opponents who were at a distance except late and with difficulty, nor could they use sword or spear whenever they saw them bearing down upon them; but their attention was kept throughout by the shouting and crowding among themselves, as they continually collided with each other and pushed off again with their poles in a disorderly manner, sometimes pushing their prows into the crowded space and sometimes backing off to a great distance, making trouble for their own side either way. [33] Each crew kept shouting orders and howling wildly to those nearest them, not to urge them against the enemy but to keep their distance from each other. [34] Being thus preoccupied by their difficulty with each other, they themselves became the chief cause of victory for their enemy. The Romans, on the other hand, handled the fighting manfully and their ships with skill, putting their boats head on and neither separating far from each other nor crowding together closer than was necessary, but always keeping their movements toward or from each other properly coordinated. Whenever they observed an enemy ship separated from the rest, they rammed and sank it with no difficulty, and whenever they saw some of the enemy in a confused mass, there they directed showers of arrows and, as soon as they fell upon them when they were in disorder and utterly exhausted by the labor caused by their confusion, they would destroy them out of hand. [35] So the barbarians, giving up the struggle against these adversities of fortune and the mistakes that they had made during the battle, did not know how to keep on fighting, for they neither continued the sea-fight nor stood upon their decks as in a land battle; abandoning the struggle, they froze up, which was a very dangerous thing to do, and left it all to chance. [36] So the Goths turned to a disgraceful retreat in great disorder and no longer thought of valor, orderly flight, nor of anything else that would ensure their safety, but were completely helpless, scattered as they were among the enemy's

ships. [37] Some of them fled unobserved with eleven ships and were saved, but all the rest to a man fell into the hands of the enemy. [38] Many of these the Romans killed with their own hands, and many others they destroyed by sinking them with their ships. Among the generals, Gundulf escaped unobserved with the eleven ships, but the other was captured by the Romans. [39] After this the men on the eleven ships disembarked on the land and immediately burned the ships so that they would not fall into the hands of their enemy, while they themselves proceeded on foot to the army besieging the city of Ancona. [40] After they announced to them what had taken place, they made a hasty retreat together, abandoning their camp to the enemy, and ran as hard as they could and in great confusion up to the nearby city of Osimo. [41] The Romans, coming to Ancona not long afterward, captured the enemy's camp without a man in it and then, after bringing in provisions for those in the fortress, sailed away. [42] Valerianos went to Ravenna, while Ioannes returned to Salona. This battle especially broke the spirit and weakened the power of Totila and the Goths.

24. At about this same time Roman affairs stood as follows in Sicily. Liberius had been recalled from there by the emperor and had returned to Byzantion, while Artabanes commanded the whole Roman army in Sicily, for so the emperor had decided. [2] He had besieged the Goths who were left in the fortresses of the island, a small number, and whenever they made sallies he had defeated them in battle and had reduced them to a total lack of supplies, and finally he had taken them all by surrender. [3] At this the Goths became terrified and they were grieving for the outcome of the naval battle, so that they were beginning to despair of the war, having by now become utterly hopeless. They reasoned that if it were possible for them to be shamefully defeated by the enemy and completely demoralized in the present circumstances, if any assistance came to the Romans, even a small one, they would be unable by any means to resist them even for a small time or to keep a foothold in Italy. Nor did they have any hope of accomplishing anything by negotiation with the emperor. [4] For Totila had sent envoys to him often. These envoys had come before Justinian and explained that the Franks had occupied the greater part of Italy, while the rest of it had become for the most part deserted on account of the war. Yet the Goths were willing to withdraw in favor of the Romans from Sicily and Dalmatia, which alone had remained intact, and agreed to pay tribute and taxes for the abandoned land every year, would fight as allies against whomever the emperor wished, and would be in other respects subject to him. [5] But the emperor paid no attention to what they said and dismissed the envoys one and all, hating as he did the Gothic name and intending to drive it out absolutely from the Roman domain. Thus, then, did these events take place.

[6] Theudebert, the ruler of the Franks, had not long before been taken from the world by disease,[827] having without justification made some parts of Liguria, the Cottian Alps, and most of Venetia subject to the payment of tribute. [7] The Franks had treated

827. Theudebert died in 547.

the preoccupation of the warring nations as an opportunity for themselves, and were enriching themselves without danger on the lands over which the combatants were fighting. [8] The Goths kept a few fortresses left in Venetia, while the Romans held the coastal towns; but the Franks had brought all the rest under their power. [9] Now while the Romans and Goths were waging this war against each other as I have described and were unable to take on new enemies, the Goths and Franks had negotiated with each other and come to an agreement that, as long as the Goths were waging war against the Romans, both of them would remain quiet holding what they had secured, and there would be no hostilities between them. [10] But if Totila should ever have the fortune to overcome Justinian in the war, the Goths and the Franks would then settle these matters in whatever way was in interest of both sides. That was the agreement. [11] Theudebert was succeeded by his son Theudebald. The emperor sent as envoy to him Leontios, the son-in-law of Athanasios and a member of the senate, inviting him to an alliance against Totila and the Goths and asking that he withdraw from those parts of Italy on which Theudebert had set his mind wrongfully to trespass.

[12] Leontios came before Theudebald and spoke as follows:

Leontios to Theudebald

It is likely that on other occasions too events have gone against expectation, but such a thing as what has been done to the Romans by you now has, I think, never happened to anyone else in the world. [13] For the emperor Justinian did not enter into this war, nor did he let it appear that he was about to fight the Goths, until the Franks, in the name of alliance and friendship, had received from him great sums of money and agreed to assist him in the struggle. [14] But they have not only fulfilled *none* of their promises, they have further wronged the Romans in a way that no one could have easily imagined. [15] For your father, Theudebert, set out to trespass upon territory to which he had no just claim and which the emperor had mastered with great labor by the perils of war, and that too while all the Franks were standing aside. [16] Therefore, I now come to you, not to reproach you or lay charges against you, but in order to make demands and to counsel you as to what will be in your interest. [17] I say, then, that you should retain the prosperity that you now enjoy, but allow the Romans to keep their own; [18] for when a nation has great power, the improper acquisition of even trivial things has often been enough to strip that people of the goods it has enjoyed since ancient times, as prosperity tends not to associate itself with injustice. I ask also that you join with us in carrying on the war against Totila, and so fulfill your father's agreement. [19] For what is fitting for trueborn sons above all others is this, to correct whatever mistakes their parents may have made and to continue and confirm whatever was well done by them. [20] Indeed, this is a thing that discerning men would ardently pray for, namely that their children might emulate their best deeds, and that whatever has not been well done by them should be corrected by no one other than their children. [21] In fact you ought to have sided in this war with the Romans unsummoned. For our struggle is against the Goths, who have been bitter enemies of the Franks from the very start and are altogether untrustworthy toward them, waging a truceless

> and implacable war against them through all the ages. [22] Of course they do not hesitate now, through fear of us, to flatter you; but if ever they get rid of us, they will not long after display their attitude toward the Franks. [23] For evil men cannot change their character either in prosperity or in adversity, although in misfortune they generally tend to conceal it, especially when they need something from their neighbors, for need forces them to cover up their evil intention. [24] Recall these things and renew your friendship with the emperor; defend yourselves against your ancient enemies with all your power.

[25] That is what Leontios said. Theudebald replied as follows:

Theudebald to Leontios

> You are wrong and unjust in summoning us to be allies against the Goths, for the Goths happen now to be our friends. If the Franks are unfaithful to *them*, neither will they ever be faithful to *you*. [26] For men who have once been seen to turn against their friends are always such as to deviate from the path of justice. As for the lands you have mentioned, we will say only this, that my father Theudebert never set his mind upon doing violence to any of his neighbors or usurping the possessions of others. [27] Here is the proof: I am not rich. He did not acquire these lands by robbing the Romans of them, but he took possession of them as a gift from Totila, who already held them and expressly handed them over to him, and for this the emperor Justinian should congratulate the Franks. [28] For he who sees men who have robbed him of some of his own possessions roughly handled by any others should naturally rejoice, believing that those who wronged him have rightly and justly paid the penalty, except if he is privately envious of those who have done the violence, for men think that the appropriation by others of property that is claimed by an enemy creates envy. [29] We can, however, leave to arbitration the decision of these matters, with the understanding that, if it becomes apparent that my father robbed the Romans of anything, we will be required to restore it without delay. We will presently send envoys to Byzantion in regard to this matter.

[30] With such words he dismissed Leontios and sent Leudard, a Frank, with three others to the emperor Justinian. Upon their arrival at Byzantion they discussed the matters for which they had come.

late 551–early 552

[31] Totila was now eager to seize the islands that belong to Libya. He gathered a fleet of ships immediately and, putting a substantial army on board, sent it to Corsica and Sardinia. [32] This fleet first sailed off to Corsica and, finding no defenders, took the island, and afterward took over Sardinia likewise. [33] Totila made both these islands subject to the payment of tribute. When this was learned by Ioannes, the commander of the Roman army in Libya, he sent a fleet with a strong force of soldiers to Sardinia. [34] When they came close to the city of Cagliari, they made camp in order to lay siege to it, for they did not consider themselves able to storm the wall, as the Goths had a sufficient garrison there. [35] When the barbarians perceived this, they made a sally against them from the city and, falling suddenly upon their enemy, routed them with no difficulty and slew many. [36] The rest saved themselves for the moment by fleeing to the ships,

but a little later they cast off from there and went to Carthage with the whole fleet. [37] They spent the winter there, in order to make an expedition to Corsica and Sardinia with fuller preparation at the opening of spring. This island of Sardinia was formerly called Sardo. [38] In that place there grows a certain herb that, if men eat it, a fatal convulsion immediately comes over them and they die not long afterward, giving the impression of laughing, as it were, because of the convulsion, and this laughter they call "Sardonic" from the name of that place.[828] [39] As for Corsica, it was called by men of ancient times Kyrnos. On it are found apes like men, and there is also a breed of horses only a little larger than sheep.[829] So much for that.

early 552 **25.** A great host of Slavs now descended upon Illyria and inflicted sufferings there that are not easily described. The emperor Justinian sent an army against them commanded among others by the sons of Germanos.[830] [2] But this army was far outnumbered by the enemy and unable to engage with them, so it remained always in the rear and cut down the stragglers left by the barbarians. [3] They killed many but took a few prisoner, sending them on to the emperor. These barbarians nevertheless continued their work of devastation. [4] Spending a long time on this plundering expedition, they filled all the roads with corpses, enslaved countless multitudes, and pillaged everything without meeting any opposition; finally, they departed for home with all their plunder. [5] Nor could the Romans ambush them while they were crossing the Danube or harm them in any other way, as the Gepids, who had made a deal with them, met them and ferried them across, receiving large payment for their labor. The payment was at the rate of one gold *stater* per head. [6] The emperor took this very badly, as he had no possible means of checking the barbarians in the future when they crossed the Danube in order to plunder the Roman realm, or when they were departing from such expeditions with the booty they had gained, and he wished for these reasons to enter into some sort of treaty with the nation of the Gepids.

[7] Meanwhile the Gepids and the Lombards were once more moving against each other determined to make war. But the Gepids, fearing the power of the Romans (for they had by no means failed to hear that the emperor Justinian had made a sworn alliance with the Lombards), were eager to become friends and allies of the Romans. [8] They immediately sent envoys to Byzantion inviting the emperor to accept an alliance with them also, and he without hesitation gave them pledges of alliance. [9] At the request of the same envoys, twelve members of the senate also furnished them with a sworn statement confirming this treaty. [10] But not long after this, when the

828. This was a common explanation of the origin of the term "sardonic laughter," meaning a cruel, bitter laughter, but there were others, listed by the *Souda* s.v. *Sardanios gelôs*. The plant was named *Ranunculus Sardoüs* (or *Sardinian crowfoot*). In 2009 scientists discovered a hemlock water dropwart that can have such a facial effect (*Oenanthe crocata*).

829. Strabo, *Geography* 5.2.7, describes the inhabitants of Corsica as more bestial than wild animals.

830. I.e., Ioustinos and Ioustinianos.

Lombards according to the terms of their alliance requested an army to fight with them against the Gepids, the emperor Justinian sent it, accusing the Gepids of transporting some Slavs across the Danube river to the detriment of the Romans after the treaty was made. [11] The leaders of this army were, first, Ioustinos and Ioustinianos, the sons of Germanos; second, Aratios; third, Suartua, who had previously been appointed by Justinian ruler over the Heruls (but when those who had come from the island of Thule rose against him, as told by me in a previous book,[831] he had returned in flight to the emperor and immediately became general of the Roman units in Byzantion); and, lastly, Amalafrida, a Goth, grandson of Amalafrida, the sister of Theoderic, king of the Goths, and the son of Hermanifrid, the former ruler of the Thuringians. [12] This man had been brought by Belisarios to Byzantion with Vittigis and the emperor had appointed him a Roman officer and betrothed his sister to Audoin, the ruler of the Lombards. [13] But not a man of that army reached the Lombards except Amalafrida with his followers. For the others stopped at the city of Ulpiana in Illyria by imperial order, as a civil war had divided the inhabitants of that place concerning the matters over which the Christians fight among themselves, as will be told by me in a treatise on this subject.[832] [14] So the Lombards in full force and accompanied by Amalafrida came into the lands of the Gepids; the latter met them and a fierce battle ensued in which the Gepids were defeated, and they say that a vast number of them perished in this engagement. [15] Thereupon Audoin, king of the Lombards, sent some of his followers to Byzantion, first to announce the good news to the emperor Justinian, seeing as the enemy had been defeated, and, secondly, to reproach him because the emperor's army had not been present in accordance with the terms of their alliance, although a large host of Lombards had recently been sent to march with Narses against Totila and the Goths. Such was the course of these events.

[16] It was at this time that powerful earthquakes occurred throughout Greece, *552*
with Boiotia, Achaia, and the lands around the Gulf of Corinth being badly shaken.[833] [17] Countless towns and eight cities were leveled to the ground, among which were Chaironeia, Koroneia, and Patrai, and all of Naupaktos, where there was also great loss of life. [18] The earth was torn apart in many places and formed chasms. Now some of these openings came together again so that the earth presented the same form and appearance as before, but in other places they remained open, so that the people in those places are unable to meet with each other except by using many detours. [19] But in the gulf between Thessaly and Boiotia there was a sudden influx of the sea at the city called Echinos and at Skarpheia in Boiotia. [20] Advancing far over the land, it flooded the towns there and leveled them immediately. A long time passed during which the sea overlapped with the mainland, so that for a considerable period it was possible for men to walk on foot to the islands that are inside this gulf, as the sea water, obviously,

831. 6.15.35.

832. This is a reference to the *Eccleasiastical History* that Prokopios apparently never wrote.

833. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 3.89, for a similar event.

had abandoned its proper place and, strange to say, spread over the land as far as the mountains that rise there. [21] But when the sea returned to its proper place, fish were left on the ground, whose appearance was altogether unfamiliar to the people of the country, so they seemed a kind of prodigy. [22] Thinking them edible they picked them up to grill them, but when the heat of the fire touched them the whole body fell into a liquid putrefaction of an unbearable sort. [23] In the place where the so-called Cleft is located[834] there was a tremendous earthquake that caused more loss of life than in all the rest of Greece, especially on account of a festival which they happened to be celebrating there and for which many had gathered in that place from all Greece.

[24] In Italy the following took place. The people of Crotone and the soldiers who formed the garrison there, commanded by Palladios, were closely besieged by the Goths; being hard-pressed by scarcity of provisions, they had many times sent to Sicily without being detected by the enemy, putting on notice the commanders of the Roman army there, especially Artabanes, by saying that, if they did not relieve them as soon as possible they would, little though they wished it, surrender themselves and the city to the enemy not long thereafter. [25] But no one came from there to assist them. And the winter drew to a close, and the seventeenth year ended in this war, the history of which Prokopios has written.[835]

26. The emperor, learning of the situation at Crotone, sent to Greece and ordered the garrison of Thermopylai to sail swiftly to Italy and to help the besieged in Crotone with all their power. [2] They obeyed this order; setting sail with great haste and chancing to find a favoring wind, they put in unexpectedly at the harbor of Crotone. The barbarians, upon seeing the fleet all of a sudden, were plunged immediately into great fear and in wild confusion broke up the siege. [3] Some of them escaped by ship to the harbor of Taranto, while others, going by land, withdrew to Mount Skylaion.[836] This event humbled the spirit of the Goths still more. [4] As a result Ragnaris, a Goth of note, who held the garrison at Taranto, and Mora, who commanded the guards in Acerenza, opened negotiations, by the wish of their soldiers, with Pakourios, son of Paranios, commander of the Romans in Otranto, and they agreed that, on condition that they receive pledges for their safety from the emperor Justinian, they would surrender themselves with their men to the Romans together with the strongholds they had been set to guard. In order, then, to confirm this agreement Pakourios journeyed to Byzantion.

Apr. 552 [5] Narses now set out from Salona and moved against Totila and the Goths with the whole Roman army, a huge one; for he had received from the emperor an extremely large sum of money, [6] with which he was, first, to gather a formidable army and meet the other requirements of the war, and, after that, to pay the soldiers in Italy all the money owed to them from the past. The emperor had been delinquent in this matter for

834. This place, Schisma, is otherwise unknown.

835. I.e., the year (roughly) from the spring of 551 to the spring of 552.

836. Or Skylakion, in Bruttium (modern Squillace).

a long time, and the soldiers were not receiving from the public treasury, as was usual, the pay due to them. He was also to force the minds of the soldiers who had deserted to Totila, so that they would be made tractable by this money and reverse their allegiance. [7] The emperor Justinian had indeed conducted this war very negligently in the past, but he made the most notable preparation for it at last. [8] For when Narses saw that he urgently desired him to lead an expedition against Italy, he displayed an ambition becoming to a general, declaring that he would not obey the emperor's command unless he could take with him battle-worthy forces. [9] So by taking this position he obtained from the emperor money, men, and arms in quantities worthy of the Roman empire, and he himself displayed a most tireless enthusiasm and so collected an adequate army. [10] He not only took with him many Roman soldiers from Byzantion, but he also collected many from the lands of Thrace and Illyria. [11] Ioannes accompanied him too with his own army and that left by his father-in-law Germanos. [12] Moreover, Audoin, the ruler of the Lombards, was won over by the emperor Justinian and by much money, and, in accordance with the treaty of alliance, selected twenty-five hundred of his men who were capable warriors and sent them to fight with the Romans; and they were attended by more than three thousand fighting men as servants. [13] He also had with him more than three thousand of the Herul nation, all horsemen, commanded by Filimuth and others, besides great numbers of Huns. Dagisthaios too was there with his followers, having been released from prison for this purpose; also Kabades with many Persian deserters (this man was the son of Zamasp and grandson of Kabades, the king of the Persians, and I mentioned in a previous book how he escaped from his uncle Chosroes through the efforts of the *kanarang* and came long before to the land of the Romans).[837] There was also Asbados, a young man of Gepid origin and an especially energetic man, having with him four hundred men of his people who were capable warriors. Besides these there was Aruth, a Herul, who from boyhood had admired Roman ways and had made the daughter of Maurikios, son of Mundo, his married wife, being himself a most valiant fighter, and he brought with him a large number of Heruls who were especially distinguished in the perils of war. Finally, there was Ioannes called the Eater, whom I have mentioned in the preceding narrative, with a large force of able Roman soldiers. [14] Narses, for his part, was a man of great generosity and extraordinarily eager to help those who needed it; being invested with great power by the emperor, he exercised his judgment freely in those matters that interested him. [15] Any commanders and soldiers too had in former times benefited from his generosity. [16] So naturally when he was appointed general against Totila and the Goths, each and every one desired most eagerly to serve under him, some wishing to repay him for old favors and others probably expecting, as was natural, to receive great gifts from him. [17] The Heruls and other barbarians were particularly well disposed toward him, having been especially well treated by him.

[18] When they had reached a point close to Venetia, he sent a messenger to the rulers of the Franks who commanded the fortresses there, demanding that they allow

837. 1.23.7–11.

his army free passage, as being friends. [19] But they said that they would by no means grant this to Narses, albeit they did not openly reveal the real reason: with all possible care they concealed the fact that it was in the interest of the Franks, or because of their goodwill toward the Goths, that they were barring his passage and putting forward a pretext that did not appear plausible, namely that he came bringing with him Lombards who were their bitterest enemies. [20] Narses was at first puzzled by this and asked the Italians who were with him what he should do, but some men brought the news that, even if the Franks permitted them to pass through there, they would still be unable to get from there to Ravenna, nor could he march that way any farther than the city of Verona. [21] For Totila, they said, had gathered the best elements in the Gothic army and, appointing as general over them Theia the Goth, a conspicuously able warrior, had sent him to the city of Verona, which was subject to the Goths, in order to prevent the Roman army from passing by, as far as was in his power. This was in fact the case. [22] By the time Theia entered the city of Verona, he had entirely shut off the road by which his enemy had to pass, having engineered the land all about the Po river to make it utterly impassable and inhospitable: in some places he had constructed brush entanglements, ditches, and gullies, while in others sloughs of great depth and expanses of swampy ground, while he himself with the Gothic army was maintaining close guard so as to engage with the Romans if they made any attempt to pass by that road. [23] Totila had devised these things supposing that the Romans would never be able to march along the coast of the Adriatic Sea, for a great number of navigable rivers empty out there and make the route impassable; and he also thought that they certainly would not have ships in such numbers as to ferry the whole army in a body across the Adriatic Sea, while, if they sailed in small groups, he himself with the remainder of the Gothic army would with no trouble stop the disembarkation on each occasion. [24] This was the plan of Totila in giving these orders, and Theia carried them out. Narses thus found himself completely bewildered, but Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, being familiar with those regions, advised him to proceed with the whole army along the coast, given that the inhabitants of this district, as previously stated,[838] were subject to them, while some of the ships and many small boats would accompany them. [25] Whenever they came to the mouth of a river, they would throw a bridge of these boats across the river's current, thereby making the crossing relatively easy. Such was the advice of Ioannes. Narses was persuaded and in this way made the journey to Ravenna with the whole army.

6 June 552

27. While these things were going on as described, the following took place. Hildigisal, a Lombard, has been mentioned in the preceding narrative as an enemy of Audoin,[839] who was the ruler of these barbarians (in fact, the kingship belonged to Hildigisal by birth, but Audoin had taken it from him through violence); he now escaped from his native land and set out for Byzantion. [2] When he arrived there the emperor Justinian treated him

838. 8.24.8.

839. 7.35.16–22, where he is called Hildiges.

with particular kindness and appointed him the commander of one of the companies of guards assigned to the palace, which are called *scholae*.[840] [3] He was then followed by no fewer than three hundred able Lombard warriors, who at first lived together in Thrace. [4] Audoin demanded Hildigisal from the emperor Justinian on the ground that he was a friend and ally of the Romans, claiming as payment for his friendship the betrayal of the suppliant to him. [5] But Justinian refused absolutely to give him up. Later on, however, Hildigisal began to complain that both his rank and maintenance were not commensurate with his worth and the glory of the Romans, and he appeared to be utterly dissatisfied. This was observed by Goar, a Goth, who had long ago come there from Dalmatia as a captive taken in this war, at the time when Vittigis, king of the Goths, was carrying on the war against the Romans; [6] being an impetuous and active man, he was in constant rebellion against his fate. When the Goths, after the overthrow of Vittigis, planned a rebellion and took up arms against the emperor, he was clearly caught working against the republic. Condemned to exile, he went to the city of Antinoos in Egypt, where he spent a long time under this punishment. [7] But later the emperor pitied him and recalled him to Byzantion. This Goar, then, seeing Hildigisal in a state of discontent, as I have said, kept after him without interruption and tried to persuade him to take to flight, promising that he would leave Byzantion with him. [8] As this plan pleased them, they *summer*
fled suddenly with only a few followers and, upon reaching the Thracian city of Aproi, *552*
they joined forces with the Lombards who were there. Next they came by chance upon the imperial horse pastures and took from there a great number of horses, and with them they advanced. [9] But when the emperor learned this, he sent into all Thrace and Illyria and instructed all officers and soldiers to use every means in their power to catch these runaways. [10] The first who came to an engagement with these fugitives was a small number of the Huns called Kutrigurs (men who had migrated from their ancestral lands, as I stated not long ago,[841] and settled in Thrace with the emperor's permission). [11] But they were defeated in battle and some of them fell, while the rest were routed and did not continue the pursuit, but remained where they were. Thus Hildigisal and Goar with their followers passed through the whole of Thrace, not harassed by anyone. [12] But upon reaching Illyria they found a Roman army carefully assembled to oppose them. [13] This army was commanded by Aratios, Recithanc, Leonianos, Arimuth, and others, all of whom had been riding the whole day. [14] Upon reaching a wooded place about nightfall they stopped, intending to bivouac and pass the night there. [15] So these commanders gave their soldiers the usual orders, instructing them to care for their horses and refresh themselves beside the river that flowed by, thus relaxing the fatigue of the journey. [16] They themselves took with them three or four spearmen each and in a concealed place began to drink from the river; for they were naturally suffering from severe thirst. [17] But the men of Goar and Hildigisal who were nearby had sent out scouts and discovered this. Falling unexpectedly upon them as they drank they killed every one of them,

840. These were, by now, ceremonial guards. Hildigisal arrived in Constantinople in 550/551.
841. 8.19.7.

and thereafter they conducted their march as they pleased without further fear. [18] For the soldiers, finding themselves without commanders, fell into a state of perplexity and, being completely at a loss, began to withdraw. So Goar and Hildigisal made their escape in this way and came to the Gepids.

[19] Now it so happened that a certain man named Ustrigoth had fled from the Gepids to the Lombards in the following way. Elemund, who had been the king of the Gepids, had been taken from the world by disease not long before, and this Ustrigoth was his only surviving child; but Thorisin had forced him aside (for he was still a child) and had thus secured the power. [20] Thus the boy, having no way to defend himself against the aggressor, left his native land and went to the Lombards, who were then at war with the Gepids. [21] But a little later the Gepids were reconciled with both the emperor Justinian and the Lombard nation, and they bound themselves by the most solemn oaths that from that time on they would preserve an eternal friendship with each other. [22] As soon as the terms of the reconciliation had been firmly fixed, both the emperor Justinian and Audoin, the ruler of the Lombards, sent to Thorisin, the ruler of the Gepids, demanding the surrender of Hildigisal as a common enemy, asking that he make the betrayal of his suppliant the first proof of his friendship to them. [23] He then conferred on the situation with the notable Gepids and gravely asked whether he was bound to fulfill the demand of the two kings. [24] They forbade him absolutely to do so, firmly declaring that it would be better for the nation of the Gepids to perish immediately with their women and children rather than to become polluted by such an impiety. [25] When he heard this Thorisin was plunged into uncertainty. He could not perform the deed against the will of his subjects, nor did he wish to revive once more a war against the Romans and Lombards that had been brought to an end only with great labor and expenditure of time. Later, however, he thought of the following plan. [26] He sent to Audoin and demanded the surrender of Ustrigoth, son of Elemund, urging him to commit a crime equal to the one urged upon himself, and inviting him to betray one suppliant in exchange for the other. [27] In this way he hoped that he would cancel their demand through their dread of a similar transgression, and would immediately catch Audoin himself by the illicit agreement he had proposed. [28] When they had reached these decisions and understood clearly that neither Lombards nor Gepids were willing to have any share in the pollution, they did nothing at all openly, but each of them put the other's enemy to death by stealth. [29] I will decline to say how, for accounts on this matter do not agree with each other, but differ widely, as is natural in matters of a very secret nature. Such was the end of the story of Hildigisal and Ustrigoth.

6 June 552 **28.** When the forces of Narses reached the city of Ravenna, they were joined by the generals Valerianos and Ioustinos and whatever was left of the Roman army in that area. [2] When they had spent nine days at Ravenna, Usdrila, a Goth and able warrior, the commander of the garrison at Rimini, wrote to Valerianos as follows:

Usdrila to Valerianos You have filled the whole world with rumors of you; you have already captivated the whole of Italy in your imagination; and you have assumed an air of

pride quite above the level of mortal men: you imagine that in this way you have frightened the Goths, but still you sit now in Ravenna without showing yourself to your enemy through this policy of keeping hidden—no doubt a way to guard this proud spirit of yours. Instead, you are using a heterogeneous horde of barbarians to overrun a land that belongs to you in no way whatever. [3] Come now, rise up now quickly and take up the deeds of war. Show yourselves to the Goths, and do not tantalize us any longer with mere hope, we who have been awaiting the sight for so long.

[4] Such was the message of the letter. When this was brought to Narses and he saw it, he laughed at the arrogance of the Goths and immediately prepared his whole army for departure, leaving a garrison with Ioustinos at Ravenna. [5] But when they came close to the city of Rimini, they found that the road from that point on was not easy, for the Goths had not long before damaged the bridge there. [6] The river that flows by Rimini is with great labor and effort barely passable for a single unarmed man going on foot over the bridge, and that when no one is harassing him or disputing the passage; but for a large number of men, particularly when under arms, and above all when confronted by an enemy, it is impossible by any means to make that crossing. [7] Consequently Narses went to the site of the bridge accompanied by a few men. He was thoroughly perplexed and was considering carefully what solution he could possibly find for this obstacle. [8] Usdrila also came there, bringing some of his cavalry, so that nothing that was done might escape him. Then one of the followers of Narses drew his bow and shot at them, and he hit one of their horses and killed it outright. [9] The men with Usdrila left in haste and got inside the fortifications, but immediately rushed out against the Romans through another gate, bringing with them others of their warlike men, in order to fall upon them unexpectedly and destroy Narses on the spot; [10] for in reconnoitering the crossing for the army he had already reached the other side of the river. But some of the Heruls by some chance encountered them there and slew Usdrila. As he was identified by a Roman, they cut off his head and, coming into the Roman camp, displayed it to Narses and so strengthened the resolve of all; for they inferred from that event that God was against the Goths, who had tried to ambush the general of their enemy but had instead suddenly lost their own commander, and not through any plot or preconceived plan. [11] But Narses, in spite of the fall of Usdrila, commander of the garrison at Rimini, pushed forward with the army. He did not wish to trouble with Rimini nor any other place held by the enemy, in order not to waste time nor put off his chief goal because of something incidental. [12] Besides, the garrison, now that their commander had fallen, remained quiet and no longer tried to block his way, so that Narses crossed the river without fear using a bridge and took the entire army across without trouble. [13] From there he left the Flaminian Way and went to the left. For the place called Petra Pertusa, whose naturally strong fortress I described in a previous book,[842] had been occupied by his opponents long before, and consequently the road

842. 6.11.10–14.

was closed to the Romans and it was out of the question to pass through, at least as far as the Flaminian Way was concerned. Narses accordingly left the shorter road on this account and went by the road which could be traveled.

29. Such were the events of the march of the Roman army. Now Totila, having learned what had taken place in Venetia, at first remained quiet in the vicinity of Rome awaiting Theia and his army. [2] But when they had come and only two thousand horsemen were still missing, Totila, without awaiting them, started on the march with the rest of the army in order to encounter the enemy in a suitable place. [3] He learned on this march both what had happened to Usdrila and also that his enemy had passed by Rimini, whereupon he crossed the whole of Tuscany and, upon reaching the mountains called the Apennines, established his camp there and remained close to a village which the inhabitants call Taginae.[843] [4] The Roman army led by Narses also made camp in the Apennines not long afterward and remained in that position, about one hundred stades distant from the camp of their opponents, in a place that is level but surrounded by many hills close by, the very place where, they say, Camillus as general of the Romans once defeated in battle and destroyed the host of the Gauls.[844] [5] And the place even to my day bears witness to this deed in its name and preserves the memory of the disaster that befell the Gauls, being called Busta Gallorum. For the Latins call the remains of a funeral pyre *busta*. [6] There are great numbers of mound-tombs of their bodies in this place. Now Narses immediately sent some of his associates from there with orders to exhort Totila to stop waging war and finally make plans for peace, for he must realize that as ruler of only a small number of men recently banded together by no law, he would not be able to resist the whole Roman empire for long. [7] But he told them this also, that if they saw that Totila was determined to fight, they should immediately urge him to appoint a definite day for the battle. [8] These envoys accordingly came before Totila and carried out their instructions. And he in a spirit of bravado began to boast that by all means they must fight, but the envoys responded, "Very well, sir, appoint a time for the battle." Whereupon he immediately said, "At the end of eight days let us meet and do it." [9] So the envoys returned to Narses and reported their agreement, whereupon he, suspecting that Totila was planning treachery, made preparations to fight on the following day. [10] In fact he was right about what his enemy was planning. On the next day Totila was at hand without warning and with his whole army. The two armies now took up position opposite one another, not more than two bow shots apart.

late June 552

[11] There was a small hill there that both sides were eager to occupy, thinking that it was favorably situated for their purposes, both to shoot at their opponents from a higher point and also because the ground there was hilly, as I previously stated,

843. I.e., to the northeast of the village of Gualdo Tadino (ancient Tadinum).

844. In Roman legend, Marcus Furius Camillus defeated the Gauls after they sacked Rome in 390 BC.

and so it was impossible for anyone to encircle the Roman camp on that side and get behind it except by following a single path that happened to skirt the hill. [12] Consequently both of them were bound to consider it of particular importance, the Goths so that they could surround their enemy during the engagement and so place them between two forces, and the Romans so that this did not happen to them. [13] But Narses had anticipated the Goths by choosing fifty men from an infantry unit and sending them late at night to occupy and hold the hill. [14] They, finding none of the enemy in the way, went there and remained quiet. [15] Now there is a certain creek in front of the hill, running along the path that I have just mentioned and opposite the spot where the Goths had made their camp, and it was here that the fifty took up their position, standing shoulder to shoulder and arrayed in the form of a phalanx as well as the limited space permitted. [16] When day came, Totila saw what had happened and was eager to dislodge them. He immediately sent a cavalry wing against them with orders to dislodge them from there as quickly as possible. [17] The horsemen accordingly charged upon them with great commotion and shouting, intending to capture them at the first charge, but the Romans drew up together into a small space and, making a barrier with their shields and thrusting forward their spears, held their ground. [18] Then the Goths came on, charging in haste and getting themselves into disorder, while the fifty, pushing with their shields and thrusting rapidly with their spears, which nowhere interfered with each other, defended themselves most vigorously against their assailants; and they deliberately made a din with their shields, terrifying the horses by this means and the men with the points of their spears. [19] And the horses were checked, because they were greatly troubled both by the rough ground and by the din of the shields, and also because they could not get through anywhere, while the men at the same time were getting tired, fighting as they were with men packed so closely together and not giving an inch of ground, and trying to manage horses that were not obeying their commands. So they were repulsed in the first attack and rode back. [20] A second time they made the attempt and retreated with the same experience. Then, after faring thus many times, they no longer continued the attack, but Totila substituted another unit for this work. [21] When they fared as their predecessors had, still others were assigned to the task. So after Totila had in this way sent in many cavalry units and had accomplished nothing with all of them, he finally gave up. [22] Thus the fifty won great renown for valor, but two of them distinguished themselves particularly in this action, Paulos and Ansilas, who had leaped out from the phalanx and made a display of valor surpassing all others. [23] For they drew their swords and laid them on the ground, and then stretched their bows and kept shooting with a most telling aim at the enemy. [24] They killed many men and horses as well, as long as their quivers still held arrows. When they ran out of arrows, seizing their swords and holding their shields before them, all by themselves they warded off the assailants. [25] Whenever any of their enemies on horseback came at them with spears, they immediately broke off the heads of the spears with a blow of their swords. [26] After they had in this way

blocked the charges of the enemy many times, it came about that the sword of one of them (this was Paulos) was bent by having to frequently cut wooden shafts and so was now useless. [27] This, then, he immediately threw to the ground and, seizing the spears with both hands, he would wrench them from his attackers. By wrenching four spears from the enemy in this way in the sight of all he made himself the chief cause of their abandoning their attempt. [28] As a result, Narses made him a personal guardsman of his own from that time on.

30. Such was the progress of these events. Both armies now took battle positions. Narses gathered his army in a small space and exhorted them as follows:

Narses to the Roman army

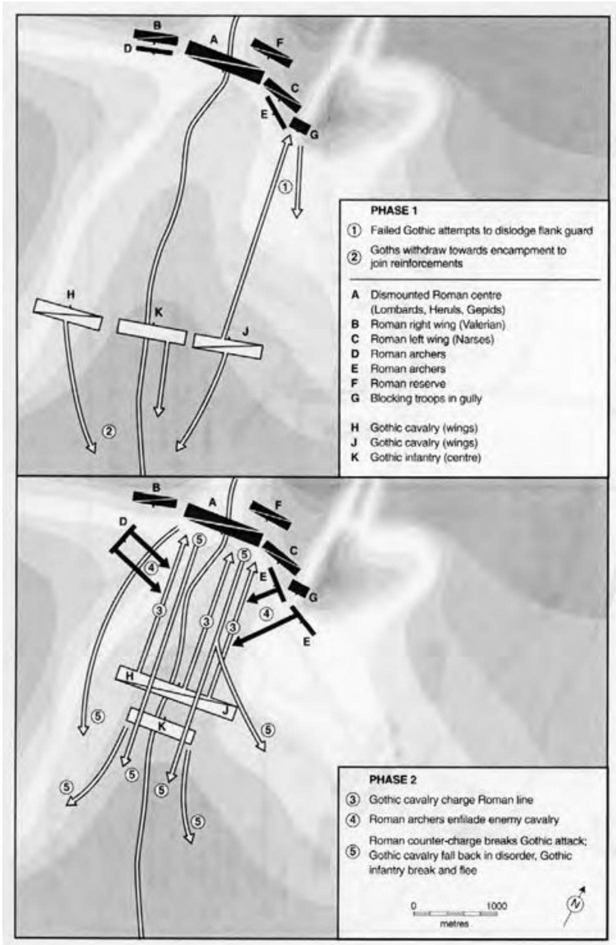
When an army is entering battle with an opponent who is evenly matched, it might perhaps need a long speech of exhortation and encouragement to inspire the men with ardor, so that they rise above the enemy in this respect and obtain the outcome they want. But in your case, men, who are about to fight an army vastly inferior to you in valor, in numbers, and in every sort of equipment besides, I think nothing further is necessary than that we enter this engagement with God on our side. [2] You should, then, call upon his alliance with unceasing prayer, and advance with great contempt to put down these bandits. They were originally slaves of the great emperor who ran away and, setting a tyrant over themselves who was a worthless fellow from the common rabble, have been able for some time to wreak havoc in the Roman empire by their thievery. [3] Still, one might have supposed that these men would not have arrayed themselves against us now, if they had considered the probabilities. [4] Yet they are courting death through irrational boldness and displaying the rashness of frenzy, thereby daring to embrace certain death and not even seeking refuge in some plausible hope, nor even looking forward to see what may happen to them through a strange and unexpected turn of events, but being indisputably led by God to the punishment earned by their actions against the republic. For those who have been condemned to suffer by the powers above move to their punishment unaided. [5] But aside from this, you are entering this battle in defense of a lawful republic, while they are in revolt against the laws and fighting a battle of desperation, not expecting to transmit anything they hold to any successors, but well assured that it will all perish with them and that the hope on which they live is ephemeral. [6] Consequently they deserve to be despised thoroughly. For those who are not organized under law and good government are bereft of all virtue, and the victory, naturally, is already decided; for victory does not pit itself against the virtues.

[7] Such was the exhortation of Narses. Totila too, seeing his men in terror of the Roman army, called them all together and spoke as follows:

Totila to the Gothic army

Fellow soldiers, I have brought you here together to make one last exhortation to you. [8] I believe that no other admonition will be necessary after this battle, but it will come about that the war will be decided in one day. [9] So

thoroughly have both we and the emperor Justinian become exhausted and stripped of our resources by being subjected to toils and battles and hardships for an extremely long time, and so completely have we found ourselves unable to meet the demands of the war, that, if we overcome our opponents in this present engagement, they will be utterly unable to come back in the future, while if we meet with any reverse in this battle, the Goths will have no hope to renew the fight: either side will have in defeat a thoroughly sufficient excuse for inaction. [10] For when men have given up the fight against overwhelming obstacles, they no longer have the will to return to them, but even when they are perhaps strongly impelled to do so by actual need, their minds balk, for the memory of their failure makes their spirit tremble. [11] Having heard this, my men, fight bravely and with all your might, without holding any fighting power in reserve for some other occasion, and put your whole strength into the struggle without trying to save your bodies for another danger. [12] Spare neither arms nor horses, for they will never again be useful to you. Fortune has already demolished everything else and has left only the chief point of hope for this day. [13] Tune your hearts, then, to a higher courage, and make ready for deeds of noble daring. For when hope hangs by a thread, as it now does with you, the only safe course is not to lose courage for even the briefest moment. [14] After the point of the crisis has passed, zeal becomes worthless thereafter, no matter how exceptional it is, as the very nature of things allows no place for valor after the event: once the need has passed, everything that follows necessarily comes too late. [15] I believe, then, that you should enter the struggle making the best use of every opportunity that presents itself in action, so that you may be able also to enjoy the benefits that come from it. Know well that he who flees in the present situation thoroughly deserves his own destruction. [16] For men abandon their post and flee for no other reason than that they may live, but if flight can bring only certain death to the fugitive, he who stays to face the danger will be much more safe than the one who flees. [17] The vast numbers of the enemy are worthy only to be despised, seeing that they present a collection of men from the greatest possible number of nations. An alliance that is patched together from many sources gives no firm assurance of either loyalty or power, but being split up in nationality it is naturally divided likewise in purpose. [18] Do not think that Huns and Lombards and Heruls, hired by them with I know not how much money, will ever endanger themselves for them to the point of death. [19] For life with them is not so cheap as to take second place to silver in their estimation, but I know that after making an appearance of fighting they will desert with all speed, either because they have received their pay, or to carry out the orders of their own commanders. [20] For even things that seem most delightful—to say nothing of what happens in war—if they do not turn out according to men's wishes, but they are instead forced or hired or subject to any compulsion, then these things are no longer regarded as pleasant but as detestable because of the compulsion. Remembering this, let us engage with the enemy with all enthusiasm.



Map of the battle of Taginae (Busta Gallorum).

31. Thus spoke Totila. The armies drew together for battle and arrayed themselves as follows. Everyone on both sides took their stand facing the enemy, making the phalanx as deep as possible and the front very long. [2] The Roman left wing was held by Narses and Ioannes near the hill, and with them was the flower of the Roman army, [3] for each of them had, apart from other soldiers, a great following of spearmen, guardsmen, and barbarian Huns, all chosen for valor. [4] On the right were arrayed Valerianos and Ioannes the Eater along with Dagisthaios and the rest of the Romans. [5] Furthermore, they placed on both wings about eight thousand unmounted archers from the regular units. But at the center of the phalanx Narses had placed the Lombards, the nation of the Heruls, and all the other barbarians, dismounting them and making them infantry, so that, if by chance they turned coward in the engagement or deserted, they could not flee too quickly. [6] Now Narses had set the extreme left wing of the Roman front at an angle, placing fifteen hundred cavalry there. [7] The orders previously given provided that the five hundred should rush to the rescue the moment that any of the Romans chanced to be driven back, while the thousand were to get behind the enemy's infantry as soon as the latter began action, and thus place them between two forces. [8] Totila arrayed his army in the same way opposite his enemy. Then going along his own battle line he kept encouraging his soldiers with his voice and presence and urging them to boldness. [9] Narses did the same thing, holding in the air bracelets and necklaces and golden bridles on poles and displaying certain other incentives to bravery in the coming struggle. [10] For some time, however, neither army began battle, but both remained quiet awaiting the assault of their opponents.

[11] But later on one man of the Gothic army named Kokkas, who had a great reputation as a fighter, rode his horse out, came close to the Roman army, and shouted a challenge, if anyone was willing to come out against him in single combat. [12] This Kokkas happened to be one of the Roman soldiers who had previously deserted to Totila. [13] Immediately one of the spearmen of Narses stood forth against him, a man of Armenian birth named Anzalas, who was likewise mounted on a horse. [14] Kokkas made the first charge to strike his foe with his spear, aiming the weapon at his belly. [15] But Anzalas, by suddenly turning his horse aside, caused the charge of his enemy to be futile. By this maneuver he was placed on his enemy's flank and he now thrust his spear into his left side. [16] Kokkas fell from his horse to the ground and lay there, dead. A tremendous shout arose from the Roman army, but even then neither side began any action. [17] Totila now went alone into the space between the armies, not in order to engage in single combat, but in order to prevent his opponents from using the present opportunity. For he had learned that the two thousand Goths who had been missing were now drawing near, and so he sought to put off the engagement until their arrival by doing as follows. [18] First of all, he was not reluctant to make an exhibition to the enemy of what kind of man he was. The armor in which he was clad was abundantly plated with gold, and the ample adornments that hung from his cheek-plates as well as from his helmet and spear were not only of purple but in other respects befitting a king, marvelous in abundance. [19] And he himself, sitting upon a very large horse, began to perform the dance under arms

skillfully between the armies. For he wheeled his horse around in a circle and then turned him again to the other side and so made him run round and round. [20] As he rode he hurled his javelin into the air and caught it again as it quivered above him, then passed it rapidly from hand to hand, shifting it with consummate skill, and he gloried in his practice of the art, falling back on his shoulders, spreading his legs and leaning from side to side, like one who has been instructed with precision in the art of dancing from childhood. [21] By these tactics he wore away the whole early part of the day. Wishing to prolong indefinitely the postponement of the battle, he sent to the Roman army and said that he wished to confer with them. But Narses declared that he must be dissimulating, seeing that he had been set on fighting at the time when there was opportunity to make proposals, but now, upon reaching the battlefield, he came forward to parley.

32. Meanwhile the two thousand Goths arrived. When Totila learned that they had reached the stockade, seeing that it was time for lunch, he went off to his own tent and the Goths began to break up their formation and retire. [2] When Totila reached his quarters, he found the two thousand already present. He then commanded all to take their meal and, changing his entire equipment, he armed himself carefully as a private soldier and led the army out immediately against his enemy, thinking that he would fall upon them unexpectedly and thus overwhelm them. [3] But even so he did not find the Romans unprepared. For Narses had feared, as actually happened, that the enemy would fall upon them when they were not expecting it, and so he had given orders that not a single man should either sit down to lunch, go off to sleep, remove his armor, or even take the bridle off his horse. [4] However, he did not allow them to be altogether without food, but commanded them to eat a small meal in ranks and with their equipment on, meanwhile maintaining a sharp lookout constantly and expecting the attack of the enemy. [5] But they were no longer arrayed in the same formation as before, for the Roman wings, in each of which four thousand infantry archers had taken their stand, were moved forward at Narses' command so as to form a crescent. [6] But the Gothic infantry were all placed in a body in the rear of the cavalry, in order that, if the horsemen were routed, the fugitives might fall back upon them and be saved, and all could then advance immediately together. Now orders had been given to the entire Gothic army to use neither bows nor any other weapon in this battle except their spears. [7] Consequently it came about that Totila was defeated by his own bad planning, for in entering this battle he was led, by what I do not know, to throw his own army against the enemy with inadequate equipment, outflanked, and in no respect a match for their antagonists. For the Romans made use of each weapon in the fighting according to the particular need of the moment, shooting with bows or thrusting with spears or wielding swords, or using any other weapon that was convenient and suitable at a given point, some of them mounted and others entering the combat on foot, all to give them an advantage in the needs of the situation, so that at one point they could surround the enemy and at another receive a charge and with

their shields check the attack. [8] The cavalry of the Goths, on the other hand, leaving their infantry behind and trusting only to their spears, made their charge with reckless impetuosity and, once in the midst of the fray, they suffered because of their own bad judgment. [9] For in charging against the enemy's center they had, before they realized it, placed themselves in between the eight thousand infantry and, being raked by their bow shots from either side, they gave up immediately, as the archers kept gradually turning both the wings of their front so as to form the crescent that I mentioned above. [10] Consequently the Goths lost many men as well as many horses in this phase of the encounter before they had ever engaged with their opponents, and only after they had experienced very heavy losses did they with difficulty finally reach the ranks of their enemy. [11] At this point I cannot admire any of the Romans or their barbarian allies more than the other. [12] They all showed a common enthusiasm and displayed the same valor and energy in action, for each of them received the enemy's attack with the utmost vigor and repulsed the assault. [13] It was toward evening when each of the two armies suddenly began to shift, the Goths in retreat and the Romans in pursuit. [14] The Goths could no longer hold out against the onslaught of the enemy and began to give ground before their attack, and finally turned precipitately, terrified by their great numbers and perfect order. [15] They gave not a thought to resistance, filled with terror as if ghosts had fallen upon them or Heaven were warring against them. [16] When shortly they reached their own infantry, their misfortune was multiplied and got worse. [17] For they did not come to them in an orderly retreat, as with the purpose of recovering their breath and renewing the fight with their assistance, as is customary; indeed, they had no intention either to throw back their pursuers by a massed attack or undertake a counter-pursuit or any other military maneuver, but they arrived in such disorder that some of the men were actually destroyed by the onrushing cavalry. [18] Consequently the infantry did not open intervals to receive them nor stand fast to rescue them, but they all began to flee precipitately with the cavalry, and in the rout they kept killing each other just as if they were fighting a battle at night. [19] Meanwhile the Roman army, exploiting their panic, continued to kill without mercy all who fell in their way, while their victims offered no defense nor dared look them in the face, but gave themselves up to the enemy to treat as they wished; so thoroughly had terror settled upon them and panic seized them in its grip. [20] Six thousand of them perished in this battle, while great numbers surrendered to their opponents. These the Romans for the moment made prisoners, but a little later they slew them. It was not only the Goths who were destroyed, but also great numbers of the former Roman soldiers who had earlier detached themselves from the Roman army and deserted, as I have told in the previous narrative, to Totila and the Goths.[845] [21] But all the soldiers of the Gothic army who did not perish or come under the hand of the enemy were able to hide or to flee, and it was up to his horse, his feet, or his luck to find an opportunity for the one or a place for the other.

845. E.g., 7.12.15, 7.39.5.

[22] Such was the outcome of this battle, and complete darkness was already settling down. Totila was in flight through the night with not more than five men, one of whom chanced to be Scipuar, pursued by some of the Romans who did not know that he was Totila; among these was Asbados of the Gepids. [23] This man had drawn close to Totila and was charging him, intending to thrust his spear into his back. [24] But a Gothic youth of the household of Totila, who was following his fleeing master, outraged at their current fate, cried aloud, "What's this, you dog? Are you rushing to strike your own master?" Asbados thrust his spear with all his strength at Totila, but he himself was wounded in the foot by Scipuar and remained there. [25] And Scipuar was wounded in turn by one of the pursuers and stopped, whereupon those who had been making the pursuit with Asbados, four in number, gave up the chase in order to save him, and turned back with him. [26] But the escort of Totila, thinking that the enemy were still pursuing them, rode forward without pausing, taking him along with great determination even though he was mortally wounded and fainting, for necessity drove them into headlong flight. [27] So after covering eighty-four stades they came to a place called Caprae. Here they rested and treated Totila's wound, but not long afterward he completed the term of his life. [28] His followers placed him in the earth and departed. Such was the conclusion of the reign and life of Totila, who had ruled the Goths eleven years. But his end was not worthy of his past achievements, for everything had gone well with the man before that, and his end was not commensurate with his deeds.[846] [29] But here again Fortune was obviously showing off and tearing human affairs to shreds just to make a display of her own perverse nature and unaccountable will; for she had endowed Totila of her own free will with prosperity for no particular reason for a long time, and then for no fitting cause she struck the man with cowardice and destruction. [30] But these things, I believe, have never been comprehensible to man, nor will they ever be so at any future time. Yet there is always much talk on this matter and opinions are bandied about according to each man's taste, as he seeks comfort for his ignorance in an explanation that seems reasonable. But I return to the previous narrative.

[31] The Romans did not know that Totila had been thus taken from the world, until a Gothic woman told them and pointed out the grave. [32] But when they heard it they did not think the story sound, and so they came to the spot, dug up the grave with no hesitation, and brought up from it Totila's corpse; then, they say, after recognizing him and satisfying their curiosity with this sight, they again buried him in the earth and immediately reported the whole matter to Narses.[847] [33] But some say that Totila's death and this battle happened otherwise than I have told it, and it has seemed to me not improper to record this version. [34] They say that the

846. Cf. Thucydides, *History* 7.86.5, on the death of Nikias.

847. Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.116, reports that Totila's bloodstained clothes were displayed in Constantinople.

retreat of the Gothic army did not take place in any strange and unaccountable manner but, while some of the Romans were shooting from a distance, an arrow from a bow suddenly struck Totila, although this was not the archer's intent, for Totila was armed in the fashion of a simple soldier and was standing at a random place in the phalanx; for he did not wish to be visible to his enemy, nor would he expose himself to attack. Instead, it was some such chance that prepared this fate for him and directed the shaft to his body. Then he, having suffered a mortal wound and being tortured with intense pain, withdrew from the phalanx with a few men and moved slowly away. [35] As far as Caprae he endured the suffering and continued to ride his horse, but there he fainted and after that remained there to care for his wound, and not long afterward the final hour of his life came upon him. [36] Meanwhile the Gothic army, which was in any case not a match for the enemy, upon seeing that their commander had been unexpectedly rendered unfit for battle, were stunned to think that Totila alone among them had been mortally wounded, but not deliberately, and consequently they became frightened and discouraged, plunged into boundless terror, and began to retreat in that disgraceful manner. But concerning these matters let each man speak as he knows.

33. Narses was overjoyed at the outcome and did not stop attributing everything to God, which was in fact a true account; and he began to arrange all urgent matters. [2] First of all, he was eager to be rid of the outrageous behavior of the Lombards under his command, for in addition to the general lawlessness of their conduct, they kept setting fire to whatever buildings they found and raping the women who had taken refuge in the sanctuaries. He accordingly thanked them with a large gift of money and released them to go to their homes, commanding Valerianos and Damianos, his nephew, with their men, to escort them on the march as far as the Roman border, so that they might harm no one on the return journey. [3] After the Lombards had departed from Roman territory, Valerianos encamped near the city of Verona, intending to besiege it and win it for the emperor. [4] But the garrison of this city became frightened and negotiated with Valerianos to make a conditional surrender of themselves and the city. [5] When this was learned by the Franks who were keeping guard in the towns of Venetia, they vehemently prevented it, claiming the right to take charge of the land as belonging to themselves. As a result of this, Valerianos withdrew from there with his whole army, empty-handed. [6] As for the Goths who had saved themselves by fleeing from the battle, they crossed the Po river and occupied the city of Pavia and the adjacent country, appointing Theia as their ruler. [7] He found all the money that Totila had deposited in Pavia, and was intending to draw the Franks into an alliance; he also began to organize and put the Goths in order as well as circumstances permitted, eagerly gathering them all about him. [8] When Narses heard this, he ordered Valerianos with all his forces to maintain a guard near the Po river so that the Goths could not assemble freely,

while he himself with all the rest of the army marched for Rome. [9] When he came to Tuscany, he took Narni by surrender and left a garrison at Spoleto, which was without walls, instructing them to rebuild as quickly as possible those parts of the fortifications that the Goths had torn down. [10] He also sent some men to make trial of the garrison in Perugia. Now the garrison of Perugia was commanded by two Roman deserters, Meligedios and Ulifus; the latter had formerly been a spearman of Kyprianos but had been won over by the large promises made to him by Totila and had treacherously killed Kyprianos, who then commanded the garrison of that place.[848] [11] Meligedios was for accepting the proposals of Narses and was planning with his men to hand the city over to the Romans, but the party of Ulifus perceived what was going on and they banded together openly against them. [12] In the ensuing fight Ulifus was destroyed together with his faction, and Meligedios immediately surrendered Perugia to the Romans. Ulifus obviously suffered retribution from God, in being destroyed at the very place where he himself had murdered Kyprianos. Such was the course of these events.

[13] But the Goths who were guarding Rome, upon learning that Narses and the Roman army were coming against them and were now near, made preparations to offer the strongest resistance possible. [14] Now it happened that Totila had burned many buildings of the city when he captured it the first time [. . .] but finally, reasoning that the Goths, reduced as they were to a small number, were no longer able to guard the whole circuit-wall of Rome, he enclosed a small part of the city with a short wall around the tomb of Hadrian and, by connecting this to the earlier wall, he made a kind of fortress. [15] There the Goths had deposited their most precious possessions and they were keeping a careful guard over this fortress, disregarding the rest of the city wall, which lay neglected. [16] On this occasion, they left a few of their number as guards over this place while the rest took their stand along the battlements of the city wall, eager to test their opponents' skill in attacking walls. [17] Now the whole circuit-wall of Rome was so extraordinarily long that the Romans could not encompass it in their attack and the Goths could not guard it. [18] So the Romans scattered here and there at random and began to make their attacks, while the others defended themselves as well as circumstances permitted. Narses brought up a great force of archers and delivered an attack on a certain portion of the fortifications, while Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, with his men was attacking at another point. [19] Meanwhile, Filimuth and the Heruls were harassing another section, and the rest followed at a great distance from them. Everyone was fighting at the wall with considerable intervals between them. [20] The barbarians gathered at the points of attack and were receiving the assault. But the other parts of the fortifications, where there was no attack being made by the Romans, were altogether empty of men, all the Goths being gathered, as I said, wherever the enemy were attacking. [21] In this situation Narses directed Dagisthaios to take a large number of soldiers

848. 7.12.19–20.

and the standards of both Narses and Ioannes, and, equipped with many ladders, to make a sudden assault upon a certain part of the fortifications that was altogether destitute of guards. [22] So he immediately placed all the ladders against the wall without any opposition and with no trouble got inside the fortifications with his followers; then they opened the gates at their leisure. [23] As soon as the Goths realized this, they no longer thought of resistance but began to flee, every man wherever he could. Some rushed into the fortress, while others went off at a run to Portus. [24] At this point in the narrative it occurs to me to comment on how Fortune mocks human affairs in not always visiting men in the same manner nor regarding them with uniform glance, but changing with the time and place; and she plays a kind of game with them, changing the worth of the poor wretches according to time, place, or circumstance. Look at how Bessas, the man who had previously lost Rome, not long afterward recovered Petra in Lazike for the Romans, or how Dagisthaios, who had let Petra go to the enemy, won back Rome for the emperor in but a moment. [25] But these things have been happening from the beginning and will always be as long as the same Fortune rules over men. Narses now advanced against the fortress with his whole army and the intent to fight. [26] But the barbarians were terrified and, upon receiving pledges for their lives, surrendered both themselves and the fortress with all speed, in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of the emperor Justinian. [27] Thus Rome was captured for the fifth time during his reign, and Narses immediately sent the keys of its gates to the emperor.

34. At that time it was shown to the world with the greatest clarity that in the case of all men who have been doomed to suffer ill, even those things which seem to be blessings turn out for their destruction and, even when they have fared according to their wishes, they are destroyed together with that same prosperity. [2] For this victory turned out to be for the Roman senate and people a cause of far greater destruction, in the following manner. [3] In fleeing, the Goths had abandoned the dominion of Italy, but along the way they made a point of killing without mercy any Romans whom they met. [4] The barbarians of the Roman army, on the other hand, treated as enemies all whom they chanced upon as they entered the city. [5] And this too happened to them. Many of the members of the senate, by Totila's decision, had been staying previously in the towns of Campania. [6] Some of them, learning that Rome was held by the emperor's army, left Campania and went there. But when this was learned by the Goths who happened to be in the fortresses there, they searched that whole country and killed all the patricians. Among them was Maximus, whom I have mentioned in the previous books.[849] [7] It happened also that Totila, when he went from there to meet Narses, had gathered the children of the notable Romans from each city and selected about three hundred of them whom he considered particularly fine in appearance, telling their parents that they were to live with him, although in reality they were to be his hostages. [8] At that time

849. 5.25.15, 7.20.19.

Totila merely commanded that they stay north of the Po river, but now Theia found and killed them all.

[9] Ragnaris, a Goth, who commanded the garrison at Taranto, had received pledges from Pakourios at the emperor's wish and agreed that he would submit to the Romans, as previously stated.[850] He had furnished six Goths as hostages to the Romans to make this agreement binding, but when he heard that Theia had become king over the Goths, had invited the Franks to an alliance, and wished to engage with the enemy with his whole army, he completely changed his mind and absolutely refused to fulfill his agreement. [10] But he was also eager and determined to get back the hostages, so he devised the following plan. He sent to Pakourios with the request that a few Roman soldiers be sent to him in order that he and his men might safely go to Otranto and from there cross the Adriatic Sea and make their way to Byzantion. [11] So Pakourios, being ignorant of the man's intention, sent him fifty of his men. [12] When Ragnaris received them inside the fortress, he immediately imprisoned them and sent word to Pakourios that, if he wanted to retrieve his own soldiers, he had to surrender the Gothic hostages. [13] When Pakourios heard this, he left a few men to guard Otranto and immediately marched with the rest of his army against the enemy. [14] Thereupon Ragnaris killed the fifty men with no hesitation and then led out the Goths from Taranto to meet his enemy. When they engaged with each other, the Goths were defeated. [15] Ragnaris lost great numbers there and set off in flight with the remnant. However, he was unable to get back into Taranto, for the Romans had surrounded it on every side, so he went to Acerenza and remained there. [16] That, then, was how those events transpired. Not long afterward the Romans took Portus by surrender after besieging the place, and also a fortress in Tuscany which they call Nepi, and the stronghold of Petra Pertusa, as it is called.

[17] Meanwhile Theia, considering that the Goths were not by themselves a match for the Roman army, sent to Theudebald, the ruler of the Franks, offering a large sum of money and inviting him to an alliance. [18] The Franks, however, out of regard for their own interests, I suppose, wished to die for the benefit neither of Goths nor of Romans, but were eager, rather, to acquire Italy for themselves, and for this they were willing to undergo the perils of war. [19] Now it so happened that, while Totila had deposited some of his money in Pavia, as previously stated,[851] he had placed most of it in an extremely strong fortress at Cumae, which is in Campania, and he had set guards over the place, appointing as their commander his own brother with Herodianos. [20] Narses, then, wishing to capture this garrison, sent some men to Cumae to besiege the fortress, while he himself remained at Rome, putting it in order. He sent another force with orders to besiege Centumcellae. [21] Theia then became fearful concerning the guards in Cumae and the money and, despairing of

850. 8.25.4

851. 8.33.7.

his hope of the Franks, he put his forces in array, intending to engage with his enemy. [22] When Narses perceived this, he ordered Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, and Filimuth to proceed with his own army into the region of Tuscany, to take up a position there, and check the march of his opponents to Campania, so that the force besieging Cumae might be able without fear to capture it either by storm or surrender. [23] But Theia, leaving the most direct roads far on his right, took many long detours, passing along the coast of the Adriatic Sea, and so reached Campania, having eluded his enemy entirely. [24] When Narses learned this, he summoned the forces of Ioannes and Filimuth, who were guarding the road through Tuscany, recalled Valerianos, who was just capturing Petra Pertusa, as it is called, with his men, and collected his own forces; with his whole army he marched into Campania arrayed for battle.

35. There is a mountain called Vesuvius in Campania, which I have mentioned in a previous book,[852] noting that it often gives forth a sound like bellowing. Whenever this occurs, the mountain also belches forth a great quantity of hot ash. So much was said at that point in my narrative. [2] Now the center of this mountain, just as is the case with Aetna in Sicily, is a natural cavity extending from its base to its peak, and it is at the bottom of this cavity that the fire burns continually. [3] To such a depth does this cavity descend that, when a man stands on the summit of the mountain and dares to look over the edge from there, the flames are not easily visible. [4] Whenever it comes about that this mountain belches forth the ash, as stated above, the flames also tear out rocks from the bottom of Vesuvius and hurl them into the air above the summit of the mountain, some small, but some extremely large, and thus shooting them out from there it scatters them wherever they happen to fall. [5] A stream of fire flows from the peak extending from the summit to the very base of the mountain and even further, resembling in all respects the phenomenon that is observed at Mount Aetna. This stream of fire forms high banks on either side in cutting out its bed. [6] As the flame is conveyed along in the channel it resembles at first a flow of burning water, but when the flame is quenched the momentum of the stream is checked immediately and the flow proceeds no further, and the sediment of this fire appears as mud resembling ashes.

[7] At the base of this Mount Vesuvius there are springs of water fit to drink, and a river named Draco issues from them that passes near the city of Nocera. It was at this river that the two armies then made camp, on opposite sides. [8] This Draco is a small stream, but it still cannot be crossed either by horsemen or infantry, because, as it flows in a narrow channel and cuts into the earth to a great depth, it makes the banks on both sides like cliffs. [9] But whether the cause is to be found in the nature of the soil or the water, I cannot say. Now the Goths had seized the bridge over the

852. 6.4.21–30.

river, for they had encamped near it, and, placing wooden towers upon it they had mounted engines in them, including those called *ballistae*, so that they might be able to shoot from the tower down upon the heads of enemy soldiers who harassed them. [10] It was consequently impossible for a hand-to-hand engagement to take place, given that the river, as I said, lay in between; but both armies came as close as possible along the banks of the stream and mostly used only bows against each other. [11] Single encounters also took place, when some Goth on occasion crossed the bridge in *Sept.–Oct. 552* answer to a challenge. Two months were spent by the armies in this way. [12] Now as long as the Goths controlled that part of the sea, they maintained themselves by bringing in provisions by ship, as they were encamped not far from the shore. [13] But later the Romans captured the enemy's ships by an act of treason on the part of a Goth who was in charge of all their shipping; and at the same time innumerable ships came to them from both Sicily and the rest of the empire. [14] Narses also set up wooden towers on the bank of the river and thus managed to humble the spirit of his opponents. [15] The Goths became alarmed because of these things and, being at the same time hard-pressed by a lack of provisions, took refuge on a mountain that is nearby, called Milk Mountain by the Romans in the Latin tongue.[853] The Romans were unable to follow them there because the rough terrain made it impossible. [16] But the barbarians immediately regretted having gone up there, because they began to be still more in need of supplies, having no means of providing for themselves or their horses. [17] Reasoning that death in battle was preferable to that by starvation, they unexpectedly moved out to engage with the enemy, falling upon them suddenly and without warning. [18] But the Romans, to fight them off as well as circumstances permitted, took their stand, not arranging themselves by officers or companies or units, nor distinguished in any other way from each other, and also not so as to hear the commands given them in battle, but simply determined to fight with all their strength against the enemy wherever they chanced to stand. [19] The Goths were the first to abandon their horses and all took their stand on foot, facing their enemy in a deep phalanx; the Romans too, observing this, also let their horses go, and all arrayed themselves in the same manner.

[20] And now I come to describe a battle of great note and the virtue of a man inferior, I think, to none of the heroes of legend, that, namely, which Theia displayed in the present battle. [21] The Goths were driven to be courageous through despair of the situation, while the Romans, although they could see the enemy was desperate, resisted them with all their strength, ashamed to give way before a weaker force; thus from both sides they charged their nearest opponents with great fury, the one army courting death and the other desiring to display valor. [22] The battle began early in the morning and Theia, easily recognized by all, stood with only a few men at the head of the phalanx, holding his shield before him and thrusting his spear. [23] When the Romans saw him, they thought that, if he fell, the battle would instantly be decided in

853. I.e., Mons Lactarius.

their favor, so all who laid claim to valor concentrated on him—and there was a great number of them; they all aimed their spears at him, some thrusting and others hurling them. [24] He himself meanwhile, covered by his shield, received all their spears in it, and by sudden charges slew many. [25] Whenever he saw that his shield was filled with spears fixed in it, he would hand it over to one of his guardsmen and take another. [26] He continued fighting in this way for a third part of the day, and at the end of that time his shield had twelve spears stuck in it and he was no longer able to move it where he wanted or repel his attackers. [27] So he eagerly called one of his spearmen without leaving his post so much as a finger's breadth nor giving ground nor allowing the enemy to advance, nor even turning round and covering his back with his shield; nor, in fact, did he even turn sidewise, but as if fastened to the ground he stood there, shield in hand, killing with his right hand and parrying with his left and calling out the name of the guardsman. [28] The latter was now at his side with the shield, and Theia immediately sought to take this in exchange for the one weighed down with spears. [29] But while he was doing this his chest became exposed for a brief instant, and it chanced at that moment that he was hit by a javelin and died instantly from the wound. [30] Then some of the Romans stuck his head up on a pole and went about showing it to both armies, to the Romans in order to encourage them and to the Goths in order to make them despair and end the war. [31] But not even then did the Goths abandon the struggle; they kept fighting until night, although well aware that their king was dead. When it was dark, the two armies separated and passed the night on the battlefield in arms. [32] On the following day they arose at dawn and, arraying themselves again in the same way, they fought until nightfall, neither army retreating before the other nor being routed nor even giving ground, although many were being killed on both sides, but they kept at it with the fury of wild beasts through bitter hatred of each other, the Goths knowing well that they were fighting their last battle, the Romans refusing to be worsted by them. [33] Finally, the barbarians sent to Narses some of their notables, saying that they had learned that the struggle they had taken up was against God; for they recognized, they said, the power that was arrayed against them and, as they were coming to realize the truth of the matter by what had happened, they desired from now on to acknowledge defeat and give up the struggle, not, however, to obey the emperor, but to live independently with some other barbarians; and they begged the Romans to grant them a peaceful withdrawal, not begrudging them a reasonable settlement, but presenting them, in fact, with their own money as traveling funds, the money, namely, that each of them had previously deposited in the fortresses of Italy. [34] Narses took these proposals under consideration. Ioannes, the nephew of Vitalianos, advised that they should grant this request and not continue fighting men who were courting death with a daring that sprang from despair of life, a daring that is dangerous not only for those possessed by it, but also for their opponents. [35] "Victory," he said, "is enough for the wise, but wanting more might turn out to a man's disadvantage." [36] Narses followed this suggestion and they came to terms, agreeing that the remainder of the barbarians, after receiving their own money, would

depart immediately from all of Italy and that they would no longer wage war in any way against the Romans. [37] Now a thousand Goths, in the midst of these negotiations, detached themselves from the main body and, under the command of different men, among whom was the Indulf I mentioned before, went to the city of Pavia and the country beyond the Po. [38] But all the rest gave sworn pledges and confirmed all parts of the agreement. Thus the Romans also captured Cumae and all that remained, and the eighteenth year brought with it the end of this Gothic War, the history of which Prokopios has written.

Appendix: Reference Matter

Glossary of Offices and Units of Measurement

1. Offices

Offices and titles in the late Roman government had both Latin and Greek names (and often had both long and abbreviated versions). The basic information about most offices can be found in A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). Some of the Greek equivalents are given in H. J. Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions: A Lexicon and Analysis* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974). Like most classical historians, Prokopios rarely gives the formal titles of ranks below that of general and of offices in the civilian administration. Sometimes, however, he will give the Latin term, usually explaining what it means on the spot, so those terms do not have to be included here. Also, I explain terms that are used once (but not glossed by him) in a note on that passage or by a cross-reference if they are used twice, so they too are not included in this list. For Roman military ranks and units specifically, see the relevant section of the Introduction.

***kanarang*:** this was the Persian general in command of the Sasanian empire's north-eastern province (Abarshahr); the title was held in hereditary succession by the members of a family, probably of Parthian origin, called the *Kanarangiyan*.

logothetes (Latin *discussor*): these were officials of the imperial treasury, regularly sent out to recover owed money or audit the accounts of military units and cities.

magister officiorum (Greek *magistros*): this official directed aspects of the civil bureaucracy, diplomacy, and court ceremony, and he commanded the palace guard. For most of Justinian's reign, this position was held by Petros the patrician.

patrician (Latin *patricius*; Greek *patrikios*): this was the highest honorary court dignity and it did not carry any administrative duties.

praetorian prefect (Latin *praefectus praetorio*; Greek *eparchos tôn praitôriôn*): this office controlled many aspects of the civil administration, especially taxation and the budget. The empire was divided into vast regional prefectures, but, with the loss of the West in the fifth century, that of the East (*Oriens*) became by far the most powerful. That prefect was based in Constantinople and was effectively second in command of

the empire. Justinian had prefects also for Illyricum (the Balkans) as well as for Italy and North Africa after their reconquest.

quaestor (full title: *quaestor sacri palatii*; Greek *kouaistor*): this was the emperor's legal advisor and public spokesman, a minister of justice of sorts.

urban prefect (Latin *praefectus urbis*; Greek *eparchos tês poleôs*): the urban prefect of Constantinople (there was another for Rome) was the president of the Senate and entrusted with keeping order, provisioning, and administrating the imperial capital.

2. Units of Measurement

***choinix*:** an ancient Greek unit of dry measure for grain (used only at 3.13.19). In the Greek system it measured about 1.1 liters (modern), or a daily allowance (= 1/50 of a Greek *medimnos*, but Prokopios seems to have been using the latter term as an equivalent to Roman *modius*; see *medimnos* below).

***kentenarion*:** a unit of weight equal to 100 Roman pounds of gold (from Latin *centum*); each Roman pound (approximately 329 grams) made 72 gold coins.

***liter*:** a Roman pound (used only at 5.6.2). See *kentenarion* above.

***medimnos*:** an ancient Greek unit of dry volume roughly equal to 50 liters (13 gallons) and used to measure the capacity of ships and the size of grain rations. However, Prokopios seems to be using the term as a Greek prose equivalent of the standard Roman unit, the *modius*, which was only one-sixth as large (or about 8.7 liters); see L. Casson, "Belisarius' Expedition Against Carthage," in J. H. Humphrey, ed., *Excavations at Carthage*, vol. 7 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982), 23–28, here 23–24.

stadion (stade): an ancient Greek unit of length that ranged between approximately 182 and 210 meters. However, Prokopios was using the stade so as to avoid, for stylistic reasons, using the Roman mile (= 1.47 kilometers), which was the unit of his primary data. He would usually multiply the mile number by 7 to obtain stade lengths (so his stade was effectively 210 meters), but would often round figures off (and he bore little responsibility for the accuracy of the raw measurements he was working from). See D. Feissel, "Les itinéraires de Procope et la métrologie de l'antiquité tardive," *Antiquité tardive* 10 (2002): 383–400.

***stater*:** generic Greek term for a standard-issue coin.

Contemporary Sources: An Annotated Guide

Compared to other periods of Roman history, the reign of Justinian is well documented in terms of literary sources (less so in terms of inscriptions). The following guide presents the sources cited in the notes to supplement, explain, or challenge the information given by Prokopios. I give here English translations, where available, or the most recent edition of the text where not. Classical and standard texts of late antiquity cited in the notes are not included, as translations are readily available (e.g., in the Loeb Classical Library).

Agathias of Myrina: a poet and practicing lawyer, around 580 he continued the narrative of Prokopios for the years 552–559, focusing on the final stages of the war in Italy and the continued hostilities with the Persians; see J. D. Frendo, *Agathias: The Histories* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976). For contrasting interpretations, see A. Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), and A. Kaldellis, "The Historical and Religious Views of Agathias: A Reinterpretation," *Byzantion: Revue internationale des études byzantines* 69 (1999): 206–52.

***Book of Ceremonies*:** a compilation of instructions for imperial ceremonies produced at the court of Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos (945–959), revised after his death. Some of the material went back to an original collection made by Justinian's *magister officiorum* Petros the patrician; see A. Moffatt and M. Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogennetos: The Book of Ceremonies*, 2 vols. (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2012).

***Book of Pontiffs*:** a series of papal biographies originally compiled in the early sixth century and then brought up-to-date at intervals thereafter. Those relevant to the *Wars* are translated by R. Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis)* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989).

Cassiodorus: high official of the Gothic kings of Italy in the early sixth century, he composed the *Variae*, of which there is a partial translation by S. J. B. Barnish (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992). This huge collection seems to gather the official correspondence of the Amal kings written by Cassiodorus in the first (secular) phase of his long life. The collection ends in 537–538 and is a valuable source for the diplomacy of the period. However, it has been argued that Cassiodorus may have "enhanced" and tampered with its contents in order to appeal to East Roman sensibilities in Constantinople during the war; see M. S. Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition Between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople: A Study of Cassiorodus and the* Variae*, 527–554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), so the *Variae* must be used with caution.

***Chronicle of Edessa*:** a brief list in Syriac of important events that took place in Edessa between the third and sixth centuries. There is a translation in the *Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* ser. 4, 5 (1864): 28–45, available in various places online.

Corippus: author of the last secular Latin epic poems of antiquity, who moved to Constantinople from his native North Africa. One of his two surviving poems is about the North African campaigns of the general Ioannes Troglita (in the late 540s), a figure mentioned by Prokopios, though not always as favorably; see G. W. Shea, *The* Iohannis *or* De bellis Libycis *of Flavius Cresconius Corippus* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998). Troglita had previously served in the East, though Corippus' information about that does not always agree with the *Wars*. Corippus' other poem is on the accession of Justin II in 565, reflecting a reaction against Justinian's policies at the court; see A. Cameron, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris libri IV* (London: Athlone Press, 1976).

***Epic Histories*:** this is a quasi-legendary history of Armenia in the fourth century, written in Armenian in the fifth century. Prokopios seems to have been aware of some version of it, and cites it explicitly. It was previously attributed to a Faustus of Byzantion (P'awstos Buzand), but that attribution now seems doubtful, and there are divergent theories about its origin; see N. G. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk')* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1989).

Euagrios Scholastikos: a lawyer of the (Chalcedonian) Church of Antioch, he wrote an ecclesiastical history of the years 428–592, which is the main history of the Church in Greek for that time; see M. Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000). He relied on Prokopios for Justinian's wars, and was critical of Justinian, but added information from other sources or his own experiences (e.g., about the plague).

Georgios Synkellos: monastic writer of the late eighth and early ninth centuries who compiled a large chronicle synchronizing different national traditions from the Creation to 284; in the process he preserved fragments of lost ancient authors; see W. Adler and P. Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). His work was continued, albeit in a different format, by Theophanes the Confessor (see below).

Gregory of Tours: bishop of Tours (573–594), he wrote (in Latin) a number of hagiographical works in addition to *The History of the Franks*, which focuses on the early Merovingians and northern Gaul. He occasionally includes narratives that overlap with material in the *Wars*, but in most cases his versions of events are not historical; see L. Thorpe, *Gregory of Tours: The History of the Franks* (London: Penguin Classics, 1974).

Ioannes Lydos: a functionary in the office of the praetorian prefecture and a professor of Latin in the university at Constantinople, he wrote a number of antiquarian works on the Roman tradition (in Greek, but using Latin sources). *On the Magistracies* deals with offices, titles, and insignia and offers a republican view of history, supporting the accusations of the *Secret History*; see A. C. Bandy, *Ioannes Lydus: On Powers or The Magistracies of the Roman State* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1983). For his possible reading of the *Secret History*, see A. Kaldellis, "Identifying Dissident Circles in Sixth-Century Byzantium: The Friendship of Prokopios and Ioannes Lydos," *Florilegium* 21 (2004): 1–17. Lydos also wrote *On the Months*, a work on the Roman

calendar that reveals Neoplatonic intellectual affiliations; see R. Wünsch, *Ioannis Laurentii Lydi Liber de mensibus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1898).

Iordanes: a Goth who, like Prokopios, had served as the secretary of an eastern general, he wrote a Latin history of the Goths, the *Getica*, in Constantinople just when Prokopios was finishing the *Wars*. It is based in part on the lost history of the Goths by Cassiodorus and fuses their history with that of other peoples such as the Skythians and Amazons. Iordanes claimed Gothic ancestry and so is the only barbarian historian of late antiquity, though he was writing within the classical tradition. He praises Justinian at the end, but his view of history is pro-Gothic; see C. C. Mierow, *The Gothic History of Iordanes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1915); in general, see B. Croke, "Jordanes and the Immediate Past," *Historia* 54 (2005): 473–94. At the same time, Iordanes wrote a Roman history, the *Romana*, which is derived mostly from epitomes but includes some contemporary material. A translation by B. T. Regan is available online.

Justinian: a number of his surviving edicts attempt to regulate the conquered provinces or refer to places or people also discussed by Prokopios (probably not coincidentally, as he knew the emperor's legislation). These edicts are found in two places. The ***Codex Iustinianus*** (*CJ*), a component of the codification of Roman law that Justinian commissioned (which, in modern times, is called the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*), contains a selection of abbreviated imperial edicts from the second century AD to 534. The edicts that Justinian issued after 534 (in both Greek and Latin), his ***Novellae*** (which we call *Novels*), form a separate collection. It is from them that we learn about many officeholders in Justinian's administration (as the edicts are either addressed or copied to them). S. P. Scott translated the *Codex* and the *Novellae* in his seventeen-volume *The Civil Law* (Cincinnati, 1932), but he omitted certain edicts, sections of edicts that he found uninteresting, and the subscriptions (with the dates). His translations have to be checked against the original. They have been posted in the *Roman Law Library* maintained online by A. Koptev and Y. Lassard. There is another translation of the *Codex* and *Novels* by F. H. Blume posted online by the Law School of the University of Wyoming. A good study of the legal activity of this period is T. Honoré, *Tribonian* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978). Another source of Justinian's ideology are the texts that preface the ***Digest***, a huge anthology of previous legal interpretations, also part of the *Corpus*; see A. Watson, ed., *The Digest of Justinian* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

Kosmas Indikopleustes: a merchant (probably) who traveled along the coast of east Africa and the Indian Ocean and wrote, in the late 540s, one of the oddest texts from this period, the *Christian Topography*. It is basically a biblical commentary that, among other goals, argues that the world was shaped exactly as the Old Testament says (like the inside of an arc, with a flat bottom); along the way he divulges curious information about the plants, animals, and topography of exotic places in the East (though the work as we have it may be composite); see W. J. McCrindle, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1897). The name "Kosmas" was given to him by later Byzantine readers.

Kyrillos of Skythopolis: a mid-sixth-century monastic writer who composed the *Life of Sabas*, his spiritual father who had traveled to the court of Justinian. The text contains important information about Palestine in the first half of the reign; see R. M. Price, *Cyril of Scythopolis: The Lives of the Monks of Palestine* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991).

Liberatus of Carthage: an archdeacon who was involved in the ecclesiastical diplomacy of the mid-sixth century, opposing Justinian on the Three Chapters. He wrote a polemical chronicle against the heretics Nestorios and Eutyches (the *Breviarium*, in Latin) for the period 428–553. It is still untranslated; see E. Schwartz, *Breviarium causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum* (Berlin, 1936), 98–141.

***Life of Symeon the Stylite the Younger*:** Symeon lived atop pillars in the region of Antioch for a good part of the sixth century, predicting local disasters such as the plague and Persian invasions. His (Greek) *Life* has not been translated; see P. van den Ven, *La vie ancienne de s. Syméon Stylite le Jeune*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1962–1970).

Malalas, Ioannes: a native of Antioch, he wrote a Greek chronicle from Adam to the end of the reign of Justinian (likely in two stages), but only an abbreviated version survives; see E. Jeffreys et al., *The Chronicle of John Malalas* (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986). Malalas has been touted in recent decades as an alternative and perhaps more "authentic" reflection of the sixth century than that found in Prokopios, but he must be used with caution. It is possible he plagiarized and invented material for the period before the fifth century, making up dozens of nonexistent sources to which to attribute his wild stories; see W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 246–56. Much of the work has a tongue-in-cheek quality. For the reign of Justinian, Malalas tended to copy the emperor's propaganda. This makes him a useful source for Justinian's proclamations but hardly an authentic image of any historical period or reflection of any culture's mentality.

Malchos: author of a lost *Byzantine History* that seems to have focused on the last quarter of the fifth century and which was written possibly just before 500. Only a few fragments remain; see R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, 2 vols. (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981–1983).

Marcellinus Comes (i.e., a *comes* at Justinian's court): an Illyrian, he produced a pro-Justinianic annalistic chronicle of the years 379–534, in Latin. This chronicle was extended to 548 by an unknown continuer. A translation (with commentary) was made by B. Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus* (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1995), who also wrote an excellent study: *Count Marcellinus and His Chronicle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Menandros Protiktor: during the reign and under the patronage of Maurikios (582–602), he wrote the most important history (in Greek) of the period 558–582, continuing the *Histories* of Agathias (see above). He used diplomatic documents

produced by Justinian's *magister officiorum* Petros the patrician, but his *History* survives only in fragments, albeit extensive ones; see R. C. Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1985).

***Paschal Chronicle*:** an early-seventh-century annalistic chronicle, which contains useful information about the sixth century; see M. and M. Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale 284–628 AD* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989).

Paul the Deacon: a late-eighth-century author of a *History of the Lombards*, who enjoyed Charlemagne's patronage; see W. D. Foulke, *Paul the Deacon: History of the Lombards* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1907). The beginning of his *History* contains legendary material relating to the migrations of the Lombards, which took place during Prokopios' lifetime.

Photios: ninth-century scholar and patriarch of Constantinople who (among other works) wrote the *Bibliotheke*, a collection of hundreds of book reviews, including of historical texts that no longer survive (e.g., Justinian's ambassador Nonnosos and the late-sixth-century historian Theophanes of Byzantion). There are partial translations by J. H. Freese, *The Library of Photius* (London: Macmillan, 1920); and N. G. Wilson, *Photius: The Bibliotheca* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1994).

Priskos of Panion: in the 470s he finished a *History* in Greek covering most of the fifth century, including the fall of the western empire and the reign of Attila. He was used by Prokopios and other sixth-century historians, but only fragments survive, including a famous account of the embassy to Attila; see R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, 2 vols. (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981–1983).

Prokopios: There is an extensive bibliography on Prokopios in general and also many specialized studies on aspects of his three works, the *Wars*, *Secret History*, and *Buildings*. Two contrasting interpretations, which differ on most aspects, are A. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1985) and A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite: author of a Syriac chronicle that focuses on the city of Edessa and was written soon after the end of the 502–506 war between Rome and Persia, which Prokopios covers in a summary fashion. It illuminates affairs on the eastern front and is a generally reliable source; see F. R. Trombley and J. W. Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

Pseudo-Zacharias: author of a Syriac extension of the Greek ecclesiastical history of Zacharias of Mytilene (which originally ended in the late fifth century). This extension was written in 568–569 and covers many of the same events as the *Wars*, sometimes confirming its account and sometimes differing from it. It is not always to be preferred. There is now an excellent translation and commentary edited by G. Greatrex, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor*, tr. R. R. Phenix and C. B. Horn (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).

al-Tabari: a legal scholar from Persia (d. 932) who wrote the most important work of early Arab historiography, the *History of the Prophets and Kings*, which reached from Creation to 915. He recounts the wars between Rome, Sasanian Persia, and the Arabs, and his sources included Persian traditions (e.g., from the *Book of Kings*). This tradition, while preserved through later intermediaries, often supplements or corrects the East Roman sources; see C. E. Bosworth, *The History of al-Tabari, vol. 5: The Sasanids, the Byzantines, the Lakmids, and Yemen* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999).

Theophanes the Confessor: an early-ninth-century monastic chronicler of the years 284–814, continuing the work of his collaborator Georgios Synkellos (see above) and using Prokopios, Malalas, and other sources for the sixth century. Theophanes read Malalas in an unabbreviated edition, which makes his indirect testimony valuable. There is an excellent translation and commentary by C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Victor of Tonnena: a North African bishop who opposed Justinian on the Three Chapters and was arrested and exiled (d. ca. 570). His chronicle originally went from the Creation to 566, but only the portion from 444 survives, focusing on ecclesiastical affairs. It is untranslated; see C. Cardelle de Hartmann, *Tunnunensis Chronicon* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001).

Victor of Vita: bishop and author of the most important surviving narrative source for Vandal North Africa, the *History of the Vandal Persecution*, which was written in 484 and is hostile to the (Arian) Vandal kings; see J. Moorhead, *Victor of Vita: History of the Vandal Persecution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992).

Yuhannan of Amida ("John of Ephesos"): Monophysite writer, agitator, and missionary, after 558 the (titular) bishop of Ephesos. Later in life he wrote an ecclesiastical history (in Syriac) that has mostly been lost, though sections of its second part, which included the reign of Justinian, were reused in a Syriac chronicle written toward the end of the eighth century; see W. Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre: Chronicle Part III* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996); and A. Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnin Parts III and IV, A.D. 488–775* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1995). This part features a long account of the plague, and is a useful source for Christian communities living between Rome and Persia. The third part of his history, which reaches to 588, survives more or less intact; see R. P. Smith, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John, Bishop of Ephesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1860). He also wrote a series of fifty-eight *Saints' Lives* with valuable historical information about the period; see E. W. Brooks, *John of Ephesus: Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *Patrologia Orientalis* 17 (1923): 1–307; 18 (1924): 513–698; 19 (1926): 153–285.

A Guide to Scholarship in English

Places: the best set of maps by which to follow the action of the *Wars* is in J. A. Talbert, ed., *The Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), including a two-volume map-by-map directory. **People**: all known information about the people who appear in Prokopios, excluding monks and churchmen, can be found in the volumes of the *PLRE*: J. R. Martindale, ed., *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2: *A.D. 395–527* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), and vol. 3: *A.D. 527–641* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

The individual theaters of war: Justinian's wars are normally covered in the surveys of the reign (see below). I cite specialized treatments here. **Persian War:** G. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War, 502–530* (Cambridge: Francis Cairns, 2006), is a detailed narrative of two phases of the war (treating them as one war with a long hiatus). For an accessible survey of the Sasanian Persian state, see J. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD*, tr. A. Azodi (London and New York: I. B Tauris, 1996), pt. 4. We still lack a prosopography and detailed history of the Sasanian state. For **Lazike**, see D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia 550 BC–AD 562* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). For the **Arab** allies of both Rome and Persia, see G. Fisher, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For the **Red Sea**, see T. Powers, *The Red Sea from Byzantium to the Caliphate, AD 500–1000* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012), and G. Bowersock, *The Throne of Adulis: Red Sea Wars on the Eve of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). **Vandal War**: the history, peoples, and identities of North Africa in this period are discussed in an excellent study by J. Conant, *Staying Roman: Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439–700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For the Vandals and their state, see A. Merrills and R. Miles, *The Vandals* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2010). The military topography of the wars is the subject of D. Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest,* 2 vols. (Oxford: BAR Series, 1981). **Gothic War**: the best history of the Goths in general is H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, tr. T. J. Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). A good survey of the reign of Theoderic is J. Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). There is now a detailed narrative of the war, but it is a popular book with no notes and is not always reliable: T. C. Jacobsen, *The Gothic War: Rome's Final Conflict in the West* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2009). Interesting information and original arguments can be found in P. Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), but it pushes too hard on the then-trendy thesis that "Romans" and "Goths" were nothing but rhetorical constructs of the courts; it also has a useful prosopography of Goths in Italy. **The Balkan frontier**: Prokopios places most of his information about the Huns, Bulgars, Gepids, Lombards, Slavs, and Antai in the *Gothic War*. Discussions include W. Pohl, "The Empire and the Lombards: Treaties and

Negotiations in the Sixth Century," in W. Pohl, ed., *Kingdoms of the Empire: The Integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 75–133; the papers on the Antai and Heruls in F. Curta, ed., *Neglected Barbarians* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), 53–82 and 319–402, respectively; and F. Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), which contains much valuable information, though its argument that the Slavs originated just to the north of the Danube and were invented as a people by the Romans is controversial.

For war in general, see the excellent survey by A. D. Lee, *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History* (Oxford: Wiley, 2007). Much work has been done on the late Roman army, but most studies do not reach the age of Justinian. For numbers, structures, and pay, see W. Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army, 284–1081* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). For **general histories** of the later empire, J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1958; originally 1923), has narrative detail, quotes the sources in detail, reads well, and is still not fatally outdated. For the fall of the western empire, see now P. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), one of those rare books that combines original scholarly arguments with a popular and accessible presentation. For the reign of **Anastasios**, who is mentioned often by Prokopios, see F. Haarer, *Anastasius I: Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World* (Cambridge: Francis Cairns, 2006). For the reign of **Justin I**, see A. A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First: An Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), outdated in many respects. Prokopios presents Justinian as the power behind Justin's throne, but this has been questioned by B. Croke, "Justinian under Justin: Reconfiguring a Reign," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 100 (2007): 13–56. Accessible surveys of the reign of **Justinian** are J. Moorhead, *Justinian* (Harlow, England: Longman, 1994) and J. A. S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (London: Routledge, 1996). There is a new book on Theodora almost every year. An important study of **society** under Justinian is now P. Bell, *Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian: Its Nature, Management, and Mediation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Government and economy: a dense narrative followed by a magisterial analysis of late Roman governance and society can be found in A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). For an insightful study of the tensions and contradictions in the late Roman bureaucracy, focusing on the career of Ioannes Lydos, see C. Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2004). T. Honoré, *Tribonian* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978) is indispensible for the famous *quaestor*, the legal culture of the period, and the ambitions of Justinian in general. The economy is surveyed by C. Morrisson and J.-P. Sodini, "The Sixth-Century Economy," in A. E. Laiou, ed., *The Economic History of Byzatium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks,

2002), 171–220. For a fascinating analysis of the inner workings of the great estates of Egypt, coupled with a theory about class conflict, see P. Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), but there are opposing readings of the papyri, as in T. M. Hickey, *Wine, Wealth, and the State in Late Antique Egypt: The House of Apion at Oxyrhynchus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012). A great deal of material has recently come to light regarding the state of the cities of the eastern empire in the sixth century: see J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and H. Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century: Literary Images and Historical Reality* (Athens: Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies, 2006), which collects much information, but is a bit of a jumble.

Separate studies have been written on many **other events of the reign**. For the **Nika Riots**, see G. Greatrex, "The Nika Riot: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 117 (1997): 60–86. A. Cameron's *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) remains a classic study of the *demoi*, proving that they were sporting clubs (or guilds) that did not directly take sides in religious or economic conflicts. For **natural disasters**, see the catalog and analysis by D. C. Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire: A Systematic Survey of Subsistence Crises and Epidemics* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004). The papers in L. K. Little, ed., *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541–750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) present the latest findings about the plague, which is, however, known only from literary sources; these are surveyed in A. Kaldellis, "The Literature of Plague and the Anxieties of Piety in Sixth-Century Byzantium," in F. Mormando and T. Worcester, eds., *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), 1–22. For the incredibly complicated **theological controversies**, a good survey is P. T. R. Gray's *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553)* (Leiden: Brill, 1979); for ecclesiastical politics, see V.-L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Oddly, there has been no study of Justinian's **Constantinople** since G. Downey's brief and now outdated *Constantinople in the Age of Justinian* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960). An interesting approach is in B. Croke, "Justinian's Constantinople," in M. Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 60–86.

Ruler Lists, 400–560 AD

Rebels are indented and appear in smaller font.

Emperors of the Romans (East)

395–408	Arkadios, son of Theodosius I; associated 383
408–450	Theodosios II, son of Arkadios; associated 402
450–457	Markianos, married Pulcheria, daughter of Arkadios
457–474	Leon I
474	Leon II, son of Zenon by Ariadne, daughter of Leon I
474–491	Zenon, son-in-law of Leon I, father of Leon II
	Basiliskos, brother-in-law of Leon I; rival at Constantinople 475–476
	Markos, son of Basiliskos; associated 475–476
	Leon, son of Armatos; *kaisar* 476–478
	Leontios, rival in Kilikia and Syria 484–488
491–518	Anastasios, married Ariadne, widow of Zenon
518–527	Justin
527–565	Justinian, nephew of Justin
	Hypatios, nephew of Anastasios; rival at Constantinople 532
	Gontharis, rival in North Africa 545

Emperors of the Romans (West)

395–423	Honorius, son of Theodosius I; associated 393
	Marcus, rival in Britain 406
	Gratianus, rival in Britain 407
	Constantinus, rival in Britain, Gaul, and Spain 407–411
	Constans, son of Constantinus; associated 408–411
	Maximus, rival in Spain 409–411, c. 417
	Attalus, rival at Rome 409–410 and in Gaul 414–415
	Iovinus, rival in Gaul 411–413
	Sebastianus, brother of Iovinus; associated in Gaul 412–413
421	Constantius III, brother-in-law of Honorius
423–425	Ioannes, not recognized in the East
425–455	Valentinian III, son of Constantius III; sent by Theodosios II
455	Petronius Maximus, married Eudoxia, widow of Valentinian III
455–456	Eparchius Avitus

456–457	*Authority lapses to eastern emperor*
457–461	Majorian
461–465	Libius Severus
467–472	Anthemius, son-in-law of Markianos; sent by Leon I
472	Anicius Olybrius, son-in-law of Valentinian III; sent by Leon I?
472–474	Glycerius, rejected by Leon I
474–475	Julius Nepos, sent by Leon I
475–476	Romulus Augustus

Shahs of Iran (Sasanian Empire)

399–420	Yazdgird I
420	Shapur IV, son of Yazdgird I
420–438	Bahram V, son of Yazdgird I
438–457	Yazdgird II, son of Bahram V
457–459	Hurmazd III, son of Yazdgird II
459–484	Peroz I, son of Yazdgird II
484–488	Balash, son of Yazdgird II
488–497	Kavad I, son of Peroz I, deposed
497–499	Zamasp, son of Peroz I, deposed
499–531	Kavad I, restored
531–579	Chosroes I, son of Kavad I

Kings of Lazike

ca. 456–466	Goubazes I, abdicated
?–522	Damnazes
522–?	Ztathios I, son of Damnazes
?–?	Opsites, uncle of Goubazes II, son of Damnazes?
541–555	Goubazes II, son of Ztathios I?
555–561	Ztathios II, son of Ztathios I?

(to the Roman Empire 561)

Kings of the Vandals (and Alans after 418)

?–406	Godigisclus
406–428	Gotharis, son of Godigisclus; in Spain 409

428–477	Geiseric, son of Godigisclus; in Africa 429; Carthage 439
477–484	Huneric, son of Geiseric
484–496	Gunthamund, son of Gento, son of Geiseric
496–523	Thrasamund, brother of Gunthamund
523–530	Hilderic, son of Huneric
530–534	Gelimer, son of Geilaris, brother of Gunthamund

Kings of the Visigoths

395–410	Alaric I
410–415	Athaulf, brother of Alaric I's wife
415	Sigeric
415–418	Wallia, in Aquitaine 418
418–451	Theuderic I, son-in-law of Alaric I
451–453	Thurismund, son of Theoderic I
453–466	Theuderic II, son of Theoderic I
466–484	Euric, son of Theoderic I
484–507	Alaric II, son of Euric; loses most of Gaul
507–511	Gesalic, son of Alaric II
511–531	Amalaric, son of Alaric II
531–548	Theudis, former guardian of Amalaric
548–549	Theudegisel
549–555	Agila I
555–567	Athanagild, usurper; rival since 551

Kings of the Ostrogoths

?–468	Valamir, in Pannonia
468–474	Theudimir, brother of Valamir; in Macedonia 473
474–526	Theoderic, son of Theudimir; associated 471; in Italy 489
526–534	Athalaric, son of Eutharic by Amalasuntha, daughter of Theoderic
526–535	Amalasuntha, daughter of Theoderic; regent for Athalaric and queen
534–536	Theodahad, nephew of Theoderic
536–540	Vittigis, husband of Matasuntha, sister of Athalaric
540–541	Hildebad, nephew of Theudis (see Visigoths)
541	Erarius, son of Frideric, king of the Rugians

541–552	Totila (Baduila), nephew of Hildebad
552	Theia
552–554	Aligern, brother of Theia, regent

Kings of the Franks

ca. 457–481	Childeric I
481–511	Clovis I (Chlodwig), son of Childeric I

Kings in Reims and Metz (Austrasia)

511–533	Theuderic I, son of Clovis I; at Reims
533–548	Theudebert I, son of Theoderic I; Burgundy 534–548
548–555	Theudebald, son of Theudebert I; Burgundy 548–555

Kings in Orléans and Chalon (Burgundy)

511–524	Chlodomer, son of Clovis I; at Orléans
524–561	(partitioned between Paris and Soissons 524; to Soissons 558)

King in Paris

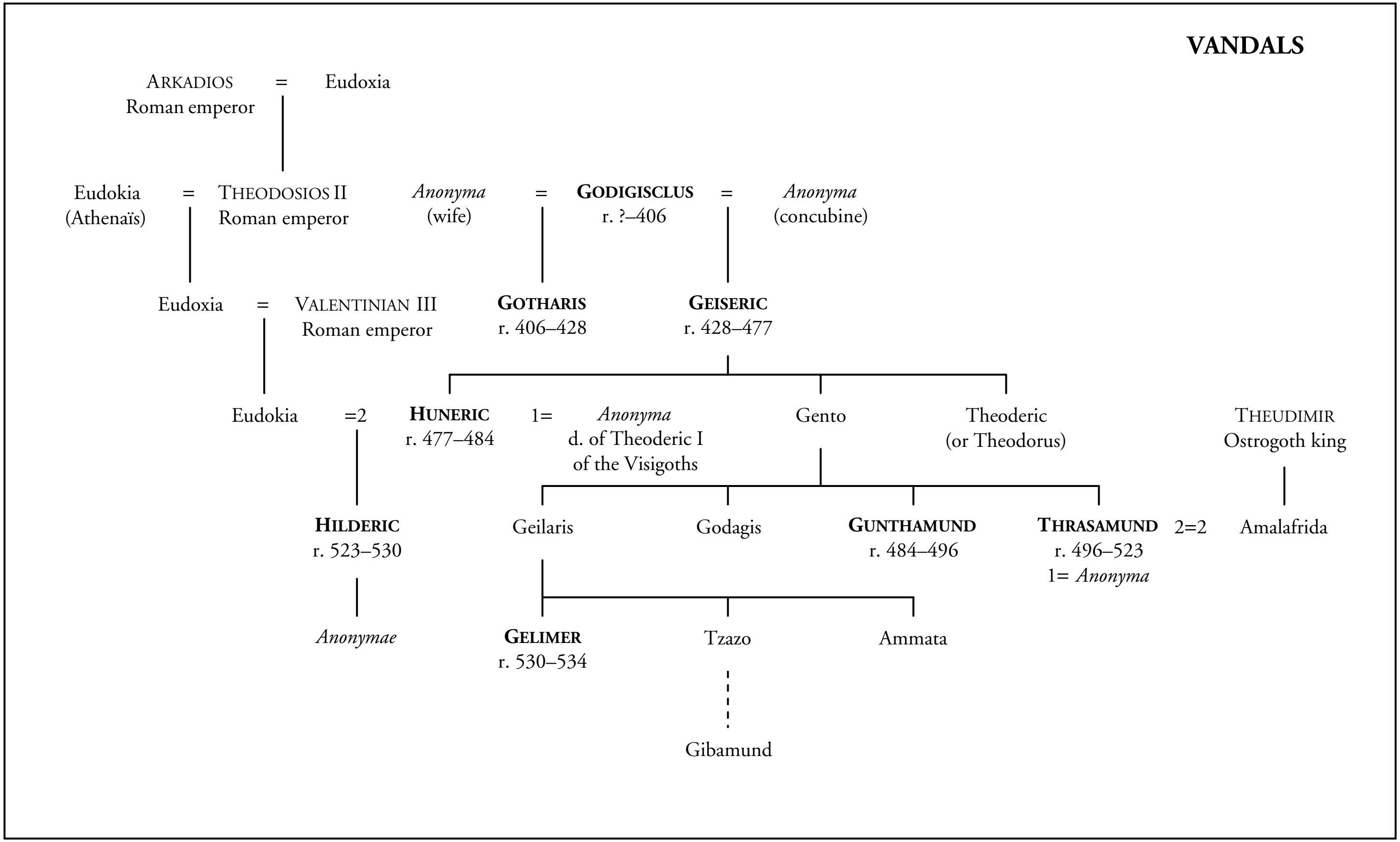
511–558	Childebert I, son of Clovis I

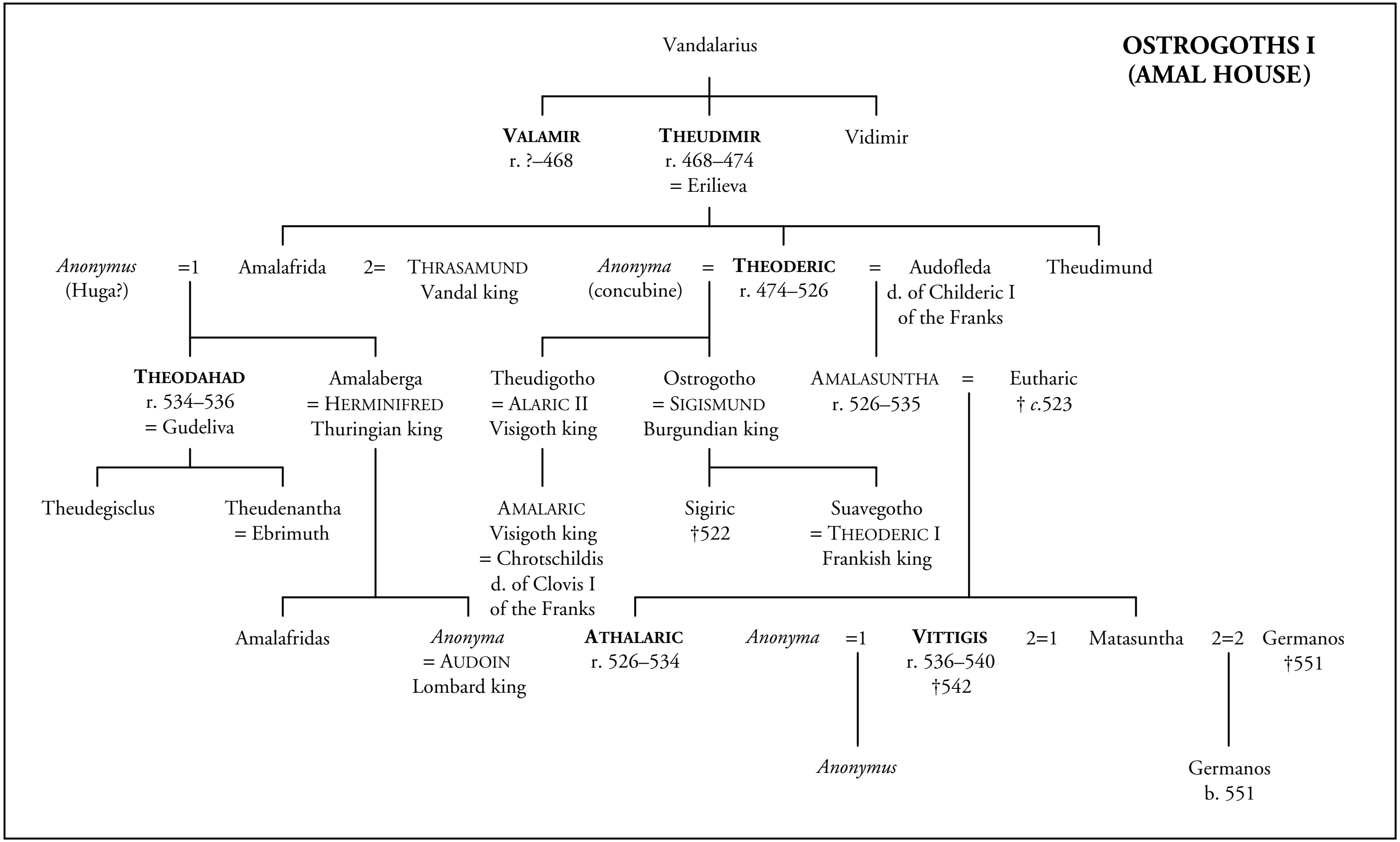
King in Soissons (Neustria), then of all Francia from 679

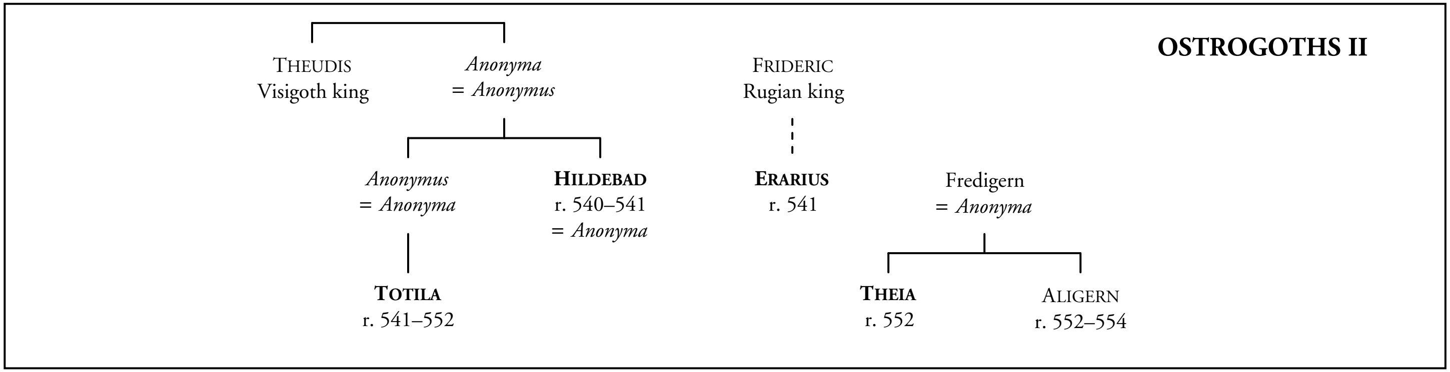
511–561	Chlothar I, son of Clovis I; Reims and Metz 555–561; all Franks 558–561

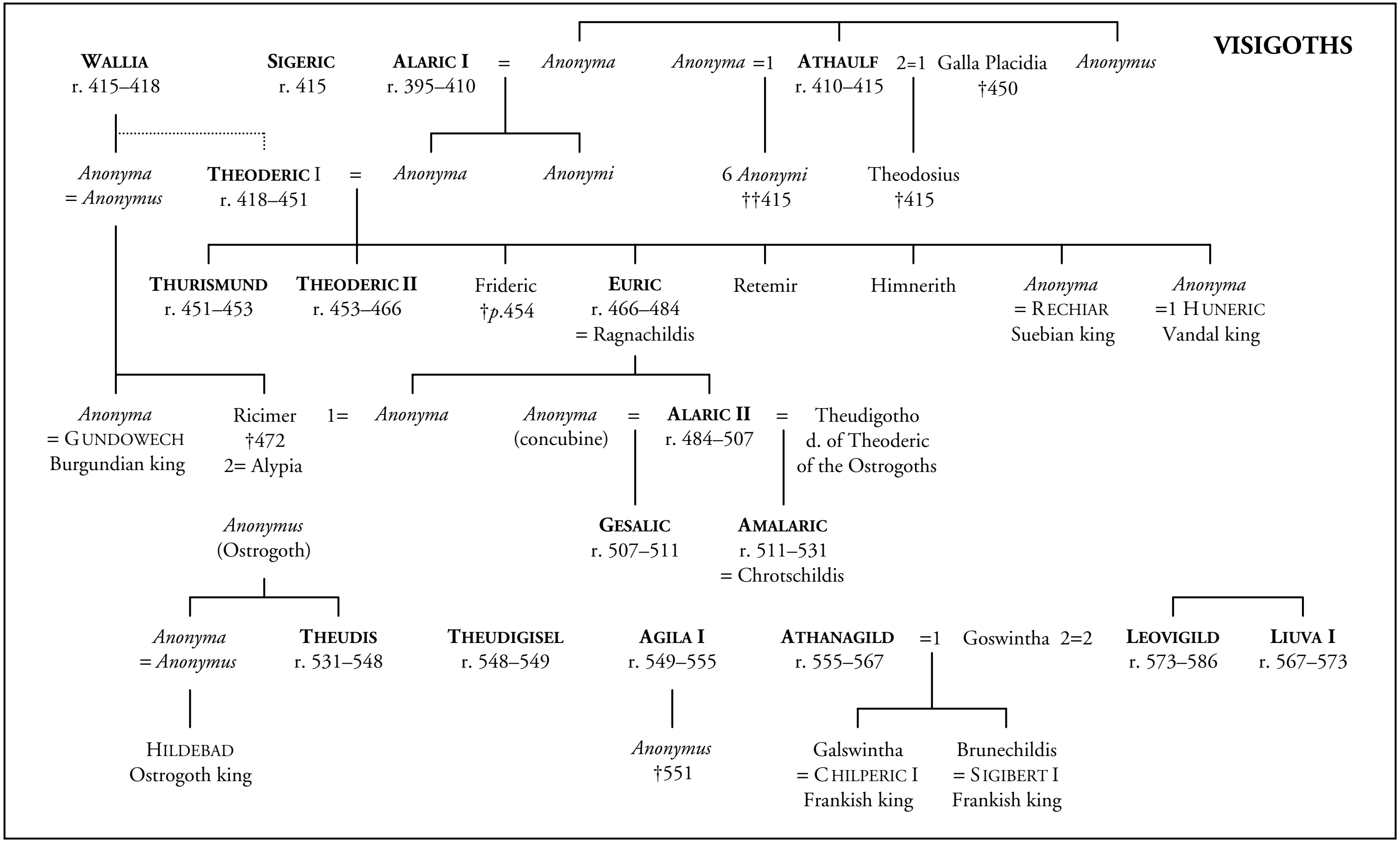
Kings of the Lombards

ca. 510–539	Wacca, son of Unichis; in Pannonia
ca. 539–547	Waltari, son of Wacca
ca. 547–563	Audoin, former guardian of Waltari
ca. 563–572	Alboin, son of Audoin; in Italy 568

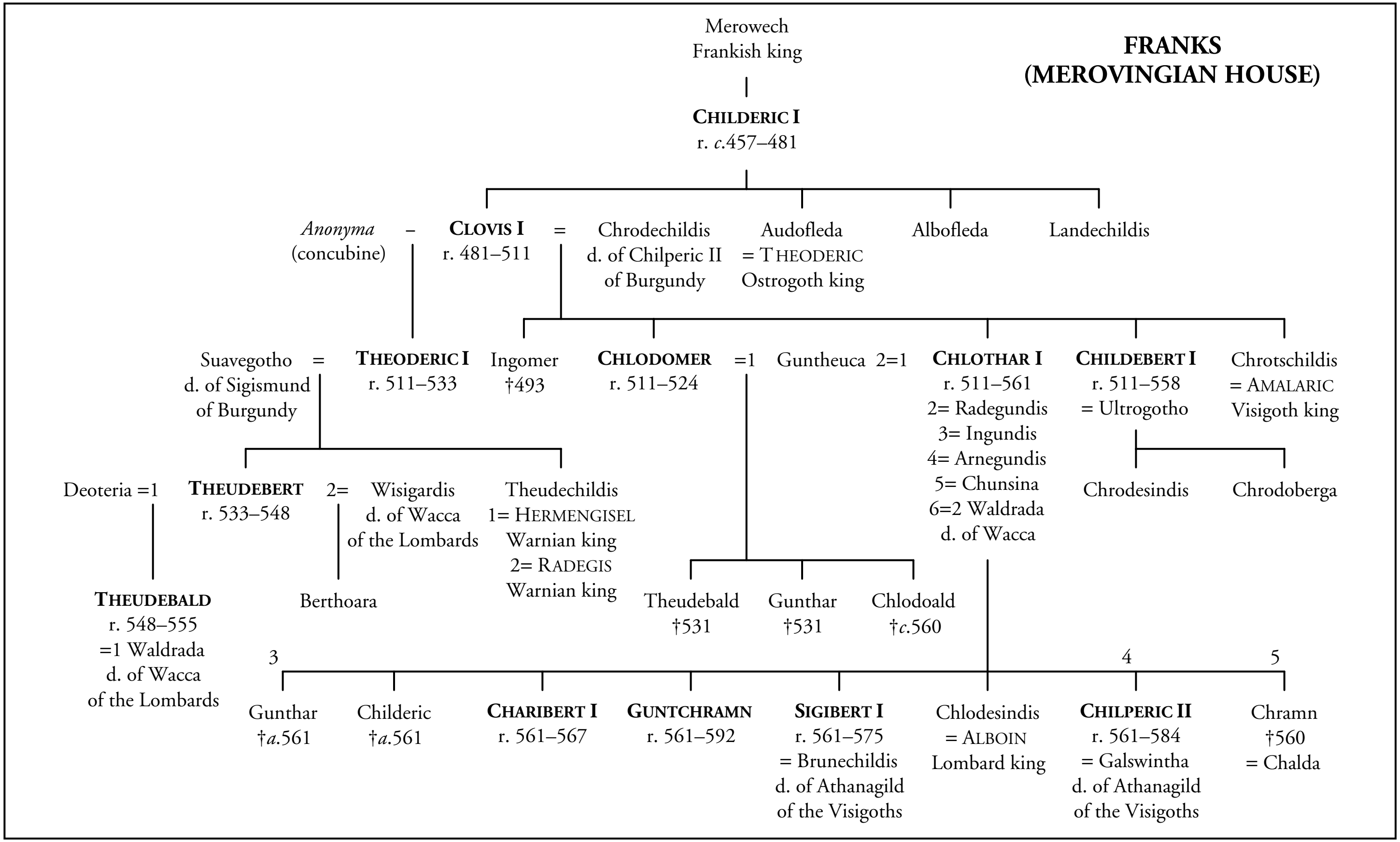

VANDALS
ARKADIOS Roman emperor = Eudoxia
Eudokia (Athenaïs) = THEODOSIOS II Roman emperor
Anonyma (wife) = GODIGISCLUS r. ?–406 = Anonyma (concubine)
Eudoxia = VALENTINIAN III Roman emperor
GOTHARIS r. 406–428
GEISERIC r. 428–477
Eudokia =2 HUNERIC r. 477–484 1= Anonyma d. of Theoderic I of the Visigoths
Gento
Theoderic (or Theodorus)
THEUDIMIR Ostrogoth king
HILDERIC r. 523–530
Geilaris
Godagis
GUNTHAMUND r. 484–496
THRASAMUND r. 496–523 1= Anonyma 2=2 Amalafrida
Anonymae
GELIMER r. 530–534
Tzazo
Ammata
Gibamund

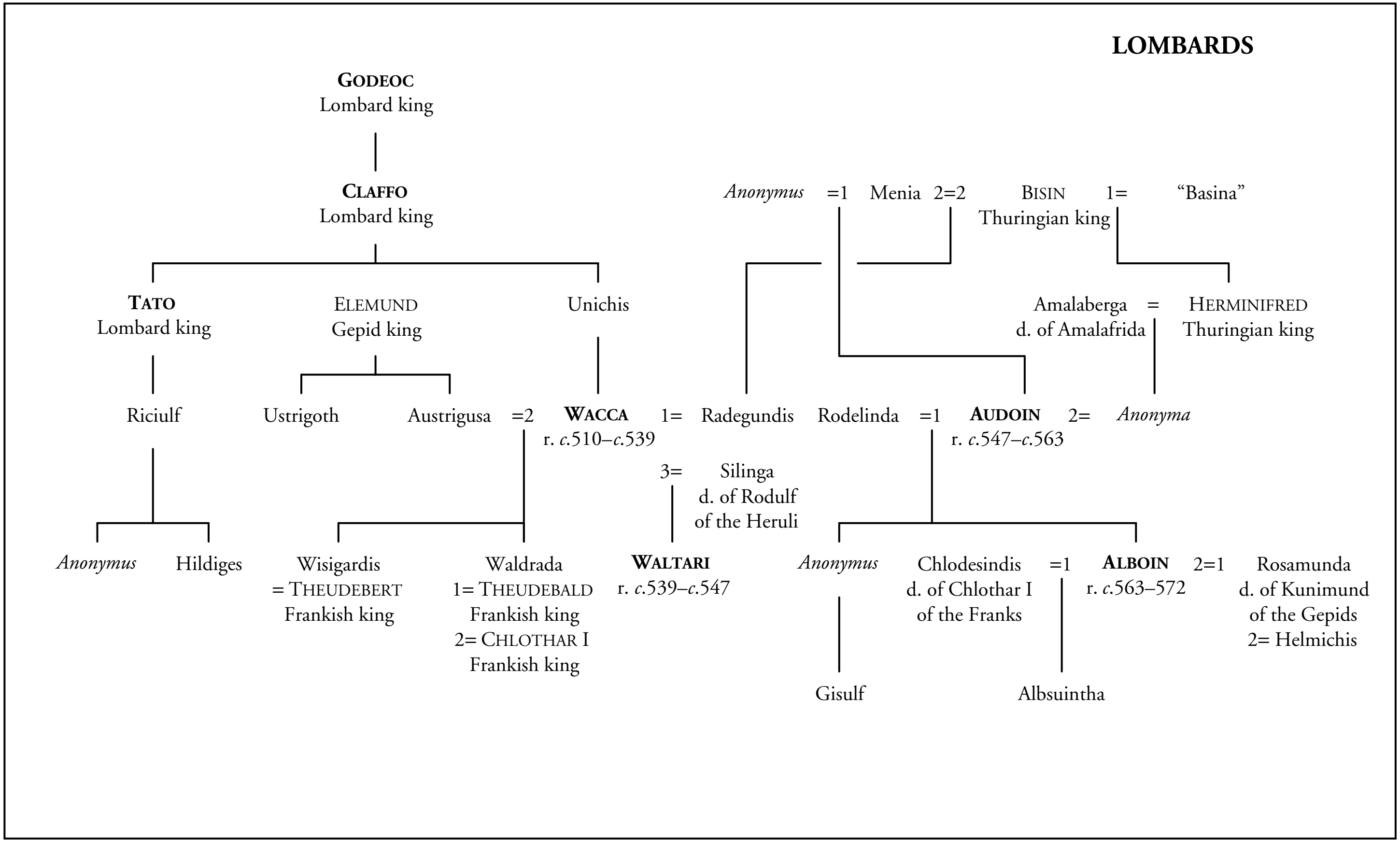

OSTROGOTHS I
(AMAL HOUSE)
Vandalarius
VALAMIR
r. ?–468
THEUDIMIR
r. 468–474
= Erilieva
Vidimir
Anonymus
(Huga?)
=1
Amalafrida
2=
THRASAMUND
Vandal king
Anonyma
(concubine)
=
THEODERIC
r. 474–526
=
Audofleda
d. of Childeric I
of the Franks
Theudimund
THEODAHAD
r. 534–536
= Gudeliva
Amalaberga
= HERMINIFRED
Thuringian king
Theudigotho
= ALARIC II
Visigoth king
Ostrogotho
= SIGISMUND
Burgundian king
AMALASUNTHA
r. 526–535
=
Eutharic
† c.523
Theudegisclus
Theudenantha
= Ebrimuth
AMALARIC
Visigoth king
= Chrotschildis
d. of Clovis I
of the Franks
Sigiric
†522
Suavegotho
= THEODERIC I
Frankish king
Amalafridas
Anonyma
= AUDOIN
Lombard king
ATHALARIC
r. 526–534
Anonyma
=1
VITTIGIS
r. 536–540
†542
2=1
Matasuntha
2=2
Germanos
†551
Anonymus
Germanos
b. 551


OSTROGOTHS II
THEUDIS
Visigoth king
Anonyma
= Anonymus
FRIDERIC
Rugian king
Anonymus
= Anonyma
HILDEBAD
r. 540–541
= Anonyma
ERARIUS
r. 541
Fredigern
= Anonyma
TOTILA
r. 541–552
THEIA
r. 552
ALIGERN
r. 552–554


VISIGOTHS
WALLIA r. 415–418
SIGERIC r. 415
ALARIC I r. 395–410
= Anonyma
Anonyma =1
ATHAULF r. 410–415
2=1 Galla Placidia †450
Anonymus
Anonyma = Anonymus
THEODERIC I r. 418–451
= Anonyma
Anonymi
6 Anonymi ††415
Theodosius †415
THURISMUND r. 451–453
THEODERIC II r. 453–466
Frideric †p.454
EURIC r. 466–484 = Ragnachildis
Retemir
Himnerith
Anonyma = RECHIAR Suebian king
Anonyma =1 HUNERIC Vandal king
Anonyma = GUNDOWECH Burgundian king
Ricimer †472 2= Alypia
1= Anonyma
Anonyma (concubine)
= ALARIC II r. 484–507
= Theudigotho d. of Theoderic of the Ostrogoths
Anonymus (Ostrogoth)
GESALIC r. 507–511
AMALARIC r. 511–531 = Chrotschildis
Anonyma = Anonymus
THEUDIS r. 531–548
THEUDIGISEL r. 548–549
AGILA I r. 549–555
ATHANAGILD r. 555–567
=1 Goswintha 2=2
LEOVIGILD r. 573–586
LIUVA I r. 567–573
HILDEBAD Ostrogoth king
Anonymus †551
Galswintha = CHILPERIC I Frankish king
Brunechildis = SIGIBERT I Frankish king

FRANKS (MEROVINGIAN HOUSE)




LOMBARDS
GODEOC
Lombard king
CLAFFO
Lombard king
TATO
Lombard king
ELEMUND
Gepid king
Unichis
Anonymus =1 Menia 2=2 BISIN 1= "Basina"
Thuringian king
Amalaberga = HERMINIFRED
d. of Amalafrida
Thuringian king
Riciulf
Ustrigoth
Austrigusa =2
WACCA 1= Radegundis
r. c.510–c.539
Rodelinda =1 AUDOIN 2= Anonyma
r. c.547–c.563
3= Silinga
d. of Rodulf
of the Heruli
Anonymus
Hildiges
Wisigardis
= THEUDEBERT
Frankish king
Waldrada
1= THEUDEBALD
Frankish king
2= CHLOTHAR I
Frankish king
WALTARI
r. c.539–c.547
Anonymus
Chlodesindis =1 ALBOIN 2=1 Rosamunda
d. of Chlothar I
of the Franks
r. c.563–572
d. of Kunimund
of the Gepids
2= Helmichis
Gisulf
Albsuintha

SASANIANS

- **Yazdgird I** r. 399–420
  - **Shapur IV** r. 420
  - **Bahram V** r. 420–439
    - **Yazdgird II** r. 439–457
      - **Hurmazd III** r. 457–459
      - **Peroz I** r. 459–484
        - Zareh
        - **Kavad I** r. 488–497, r. 499–531
          - Kavus (Phthasouarsas?)
          - Zamasp
            - Kavad
          - **Chosroes I** r. 531–579
            - Anushazad
            - **Hurmazd IV** r. 579–590
          - Xerxes
        - **Zamasp** r. 497–499
      - **Balash** r. 484–488
  - Narses

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